THE MIDDLE FIVE

FRANCIS LaFLESCHE

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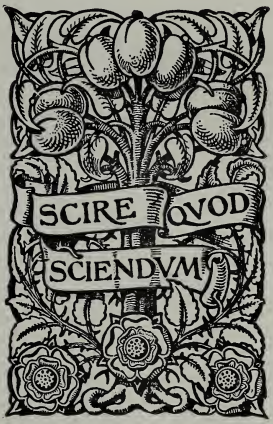
THE MIDDLE FIVE

Indian Boys at School

By FRANCIS LaFLESCHE



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TO

THE UNIVERSAL BOY

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PREFACE

AS the object of this book is to reveal the true nature and character of the Indian boy, I have chosen to write the story of my school-fellows rather than that of my other boy friends who knew only the aboriginal life. I have made this choice not because the influences of the school alter the qualities of the boys, but that they might appear under conditions and in an attire familiar to the reader. The paint, feathers, robes, and other articles that make up the dress of the Indian, are marks of savagery to the European, and he who wears them, however appropriate or significant they might be to himself, finds it difficult to lay claim to a share in common human nature. So while the school uniform did not change those who wore it, in this instance, it may help these little Indians to be judged, as are other boys, by what they say and do.

It is not my purpose to give a continued story with a hero in the following pages, but, in a series of sketches, to present the com-

panions of my own young days to the children of the race that has become possessed of the land of my fathers.

This introduction is a genuine one, for all the boys who appear in these sketches have really lived and played a part in the incidents herein recorded. Each little actor, including the writer, made his entrance upon the stage of life in the "tee-pee" or in the dome-shaped earth lodge; for, in the years when we boys were born, only the aboriginal dwellings were in use among our people, the Omaha tribe of Indians. Like all the infants for countless generations in the line of our ancestry, we too had to pass through the cradle-board period while our bones "ripened," as the Indians say, and grew strong enough to bear the weight of our bodies. When at last our mothers gave us liberty to creep and to toddle about, we promptly used that freedom to get into all sorts of mischief as we explored the new and wonderful world in which we found ourselves.

Among my earliest recollections are the instructions wherein we were taught respect and courtesy toward our elders; to say "thank

you" when receiving a gift, or when returning a borrowed article; to use the proper and conventional term of relationship when speaking to another; and never to address any one by his personal name; we were also forbidden to pass in front of persons sitting in the tent without first asking permission; and we were strictly enjoined never to stare at visitors, particularly at strangers. To us there seemed to be no end to the things we were obliged to do, and to the things we were to refrain from doing.

From the earliest years the Omaha child was trained in the grammatical use of his native tongue. No slip was allowed to pass uncorrected, and as a result there was no child-talk such as obtains among English-speaking children, — the only difference between the speech of old and young was in the pronunciation of words which the infant often failed to utter correctly, but this difficulty was soon overcome, and a boy of ten or twelve was apt to speak as good Omaha as a man of mature years.

Like the grown folk, we youngsters were fond of companionship and of talking. In

making our gamesticks and in our play, we chattered incessantly of the things that occupied our minds, and we thought it a hardship when we were obliged to speak in low tones while older people were engaged in conversation. When we entered the Mission School, we experienced a greater hardship, for there we encountered a rule that prohibited the use of our own language, which rule was rigidly enforced with a hickory rod, so that the new-comer, however socially inclined, was obliged to go about like a little dummy until he had learned to express himself in English.

All the boys in our school were given English names, because their Indian names were difficult for the teachers to pronounce. Besides, the aboriginal names were considered by the missionaries as heathenish, and therefore should be obliterated. No less heathenish in their origin were the English substitutes, but the loss of their original meaning and significance through long usage had rendered them fit to continue as appellations for civilized folk. And so, in the place of Tae-noo'-ga-wa-zhe, came Philip Sheridan; in that

of Wa-pah'-dae, Ulysses S. Grant; that of Koo'-we-he-ge-ra, Alexander, and so on. Our sponsors went even further back in history, and thus we had our David and Jonathan, Gideon and Isaac, and, with the flood of these new names, came Noah. It made little difference to us that we had to learn the significance of one more word as applied to ourselves, when the task before us was to make our way through an entire strange language. So we learned to call each other by our English names, and continued to do so even after we left school and had grown to manhood.

The names thus acquired by the boys are used in these sketches in preference to their own, for the reason that Indian words are not only difficult to pronounce, but are apt to sound all alike to one not familiar with the language, and the boys who figure in these pages might lose their identity and fail to stand out clearly in the mind of the reader were he obliged to continually struggle with their Omaha names.

In the talk of the boys I have striven to give a reproduction of the peculiar English

spoken by them, which was composite, gathered from the imperfect comprehension of their books, the provincialisms of the teachers, and the slang and bad grammar picked up from uneducated white persons employed at the school or at the Government Agency. Oddities of speech, profanity, localisms, and slang were unknown in the Omaha language, so when such expressions fell upon the ears of these lads they innocently learned and used them without the slightest suspicion that there could be bad as well as good English.

The misconception of Indian life and character so common among the white people has been largely due to an ignorance of the Indian's language, of his mode of thought, his beliefs, his ideals, and his native institutions. Every aspect of the Indian and his manner of life has always been strange to the white man, and this strangeness has been magnified by the mists of prejudice and the conflict of interests between the two races. While these in time may disappear, no native American can ever cease to regret that the utterances of his fathers have been constantly belittled when put into English, that

their thoughts have frequently been travestied and their native dignity obscured. The average interpreter has generally picked up his knowledge of English in a random fashion, for very few have ever had the advantage of a thorough education, and all have had to deal with the difficulties that attend the translator. The beauty and picturesqueness, and euphonious playfulness, or the gravity of diction which I have heard among my own people, and other tribes as well, are all but impossible to be given literally in English.

The talk of the older people, when they speak in this book, is, as well as I can translate it, that of every day use.

Most of the country now known as the State of Nebraska (the Omaha name of the river Platt, descriptive of its shallowness, width, and low banks) had for many generations been held and claimed by our people as their own, but when they ceded the greater part of this territory to the United States government, they reserved only a certain tract for their own use and home. It is upon the eastern part of this reservation that the scene of these sketches is laid, and at the time when

the Omahas were living near the Missouri River in three villages, some four or five miles apart. The one farthest south was known as Ton'-won-ga-hae's village; the people were called "wood eaters," because they cut and sold wood to the settlers who lived near them. The middle one was Ish'-ka-da-be's village, and the people designated as "those who dwell in earth lodges," they having adhered to the aboriginal form of dwelling when they built their village. The one to the north and nearest the Mission was E-sta'-ma-za's village, and the people were known as "the make-believe white men," because they built their houses after the fashion of the white settlers. Furniture, such as beds, chairs, tables, bureaus, etc., were not used in any of these villages, except in a few instances, while in all of them the Indian costume, language, and social customs remained as yet unmodified.

In those days the Missouri was the only highway of commerce. Toiling slowly against the swift current, laden with supplies for the trading posts and for our Mission, came the puffing little steamboats from the "town of

the Red-hair," as St. Louis was called by the Indians, in memory of the auburn locks of Governor Clark, — of Lewis and Clark fame. We children used to watch these noisy boats as they forced their way through the turbid water and made a landing by running the bow into the soft bank.

The white people speak of the country at this period as "a wilderness," as though it was an empty tract without human interest or history. To us Indians it was as clearly defined then as it is to-day; we knew the boundaries of tribal lands, those of our friends and those of our foes; we were familiar with every stream, the contour of every hill, and each peculiar feature of the landscape had its tradition. It was our home, the scene of our history, and we loved it as our country.

The Middle Five

The Middle Five

Chapter I

The Mission

LEANING against the wall of a large stone building, with moccasined feet dangling from a high wooden bench on the front porch, sat a little boy crying. His buckskin suit, prettily fringed and embroidered with porcupine quills of the brightest colors, indicated the care bestowed upon him by fond parents. Boys and girls were at play around the house, making the place ring with their merry laughter as they chased each other among the trees, but the little boy sat all alone, sobbing as though his heart would break. A big boy came and sat by his side, put an arm around him, and in a kindly tone said, in Indian:

"What are you crying for? Don't cry,— I'll play with you and be your friend. I won't let the boys hurt you."

"I want my mother! I want to go home!"

was all the homesick little chap could say, crying harder than ever.

"You will see your mother soon, we can go home every bathing-day (Saturday). It is only three days to wait, so don't cry. I have to go away, but I will be back soon. Play with this dog until I come" — putting into the hands of the little boy a wooden dog.

A bell rang, and from every direction came boys and girls crowding and pushing one another as they entered two of the large doors of the building. The big boy came running, and, grasping the little one by the hand, fairly dragged him along, saying: "Come, quick! We are going to eat."

They entered a large room filled with people. Parallel to the walls stood tables of great length, at one of which the two boys took seats. After considerable hard breathing and shuffling by the children, they suddenly became very still, every one bowed his head, then a man with gray hair and whiskers, who sat at the end of one of the tables, spoke in a low tone. He finished speaking, then followed a deafening clatter of a hun-

dred tin plates and cups. Young women carrying great pans of steaming food moved rapidly from table to table. One of these girls came to the two boys, and put into the plate of the younger a potato. "Give him two, he 's hungry," whispered the big boy to the girl.

Everything was strange to the little newcomer and he kept looking all around. The lamps that were fastened to the walls and posts, the large clock that stood ticking gloomily on a shelf, and the cupboard with its tin door perforated in a queer design were objects upon which his eyes rested with wonder.

The supper over, the boys and girls who sat on the inner side of the tables turned to face the centre of the room, and folded their arms. Then they all sang. When this was done, they dropped on their knees and the gray-haired man began to talk again. The little boy watched him for a while, then laid his head on the hard bench, — the tones of the old man grew fainter and fainter until the boy lost all consciousness of them. Suddenly there burst upon him a noise like

thunder. He arose to his feet with a start, and, bewildered, he looked around. Everything seemed to be in a whirl. He took fright, ran to the door that first caught his sight, and went with a thud down to a landing, but did not lose his balance; he took another step, then fell headlong into a dreadful dark place. He screamed at the top of his voice, frightened almost into a fit. A woman picked him up and carried him in her arms up a flight of stairs, speaking to him in a language that he could not understand.

This was my first experience at the boarding school established by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions for the instruction of the children of the Omaha tribe of Indians.

The Mission school, the founding of which had marked an epoch in the tribe, was located among the wooded bluffs of the Missouri on the eastern part of the reservation. The principal building was of stone, plain and substantial, and plastered inside and out. It was three stories high and had

an attic. This attic was perhaps the most interesting part of the structure, for we boys were quite sure it was tenanted by ghosts, and that the devil, who figured considerably in the instruction given us, had full sway in this apartment.

There was a large square hole close to the head of the stairs that led up to the attic. This hole had the greatest terror for us; there was a constant whistling within it, and out of it came sounds like distressing moans and sighs. I remember once, when Gray-beard had sent me up to the attic for something, that I never hurried so on any other errand as I did on that one. I found the article he desired, put it under my arm, and cautiously approached the head of the stair, keeping an eye on the dark hole, then suddenly I made a dash past it, and with amazing rapidity thundered downstairs. "Lad, you will break your neck!" exclaimed Gray-beard. I told him I liked to run downstairs!

Under the attic was the boys' dormitory. The beds were placed close together, and some were wide enough for three boys.

The room was large, and in the middle of it stood a post. I have reason to remember this, for one night I got up in my sleep and ran with all my might against this post, making such a noise as to awaken Gray-beard and the superintendent, who came up in great haste with candles in their hands. I was laid up for days after this exploit, but I never ran in my sleep again.

Beneath our dormitory were the parlor and the bedroom of Gray-beard, our teacher and disciplinarian. This name was not inherited by him, nor was it one of his own choosing; the boys gave it to him because his beard was iron-gray, and the Indians adopted it from the boys. In his room at night he might have heard strange noises from the cherubs in the dormitory above, in fact he came up there quite often, rod in hand, as a reminder that such sounds made sleep impossible.

Under Gray-beard's rooms was the school-room where we struggled with arithmetic, geography, history, and A B C, up to the Fifth Reader. This room corresponded in size to our dormitory, but it had no middle post.

The dining-hall, where on my arrival I had taken fright and stampeded head foremost into the cellar, was in the middle of the first story. It was very large and held, beside the three long tables, a big stove in the middle between two large posts. I remember these posts very well, I kept close company with one of them, on my return from a run-away expedition; and it was on this occasion that I had my first love adventure — but I must not anticipate.

The rooms on the two stories above the dining-hall were occupied, one as play-room for the girls, the others by the various employees.

On the same floor with the school-room and the dining-hall, at the north end of the building, was the chapel. Here we sat in rows on Sunday mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and on Thursday evenings, ranged on long, high, wooden benches without backs, our feet scarcely touching the floor, and listened (sometimes) to sermons which were remarkable for their length and sleep-enticing effects. I had many delightful dreams in this chapel, about Samson and

his jaw-bone war club, the fight between David and Goliath, and of the adventures of Joseph the dreamer, — stories that were the delight of my boyhood. Brush, one of my dearest friends at the school, knowing my weakness, secured a seat back of mine on purpose to support me when I was in a slumberous mood. I shall never forget his goodness; he now sleeps in the cemetery just above the Mission.

The two large rooms over the chapel were occupied by our superintendent and minister. Above his apartments was the girls' dormitory, while over all stretched the haunted, ghostly attic.

There were other buildings grouped around: to the back stood the store-house and the smoke-house; out of the latter came our delicious hams and our sermons, for a part of this building was used as the minister's study. Then there was the great barn where we boys played hide-and-seek in the hay-mow; the corn-crib with its yellow wealth showing between the boards; and the dusty wheat-bins with padlocked doors. Below on the bottom were the Government

saw and grist mills, where we often went to see the grinding of the Indians' grain and the large trees sawed into lumber for Agency use or for the Indians' houses. The carpenter and blacksmith shops were also down there, and a long wooden house for the occupancy of the Government employees. All of these buildings stood for the fulfilment of the solemn promises made by the "Great Father" at Washington to his "Red Children," and as a part of the price paid for thousands and thousands of acres of fine land.

Although there were high hills just back of the school, from which one could get excellent views of the surrounding country, we boys preferred to go up into the belfry on the top of the main building for our observations. We did not go often; two difficulties were in the way: the securing of permission from the superintendent, as but few boys could be trusted up there; and we must go through the haunted attic to get to the belfry. No boy during my school days ever went up there alone.

My friend Brush, being quite a favorite

with the superintendent, often had permission to go, and took me with him. When we were once in the belfry, we felt safe from the annoyances of the devil and the other horrible things in the attic. The superintendent, without the asking, let Brush have a big spy-glass, which the other boys were not permitted to use, and with it we could see far beyond the river and the valley that stretched in the distance to the opposite bluffs, that were always nearly hidden in a bluish haze. Bringing the glass to a closer range, we could see below, on our side of the river, the rich fields of the Mission and of the Indians; and we used to watch the Indians and the hired men of the school at work there. Sometimes we caught sight of a steamboat far down the river coming up, trailing a long line of smoke; then, with great excitement, we would run down and tell the boys, and all of us would hasten to the highest point near the school and watch the "mystic boat" as it slowly made its way along the winding stream.

To the south of the Mission, overlooking the Missouri and a small lake, stood the

highest hill for miles around. This was known by the Indians as "the hill on which Um'-pa-ton-ga (Big Elk) was buried." He was one of the greatest chiefs of the Omahas.

Before schools of any kind were known among the Omahas, Indian parents warned their boys and girls against a free association with the children of persons who did not bear a good character. "Who was that you were playing with?" a father or mother would ask. "Nobody knows the child's family, — beware of him, do not go with him, he will throw upon you the habit of lying or stealing. Go with children whose parents are respected by the people." Such advice would be given by the reputable men and women of the tribe to their children as to choosing their playfellows.

At the school we were all thrown together and left to form our own associates. The sons of chiefs and of prominent men went with the sons of the common people, regardless of social standing and character. The only distinction made was against coward-

ice; the boy who could not fight found it difficult to maintain the respect of his mates, and to get a place among the different "gangs" or groups of associates the boys had established among themselves. I learned this from my friend Brush, to whom I complained one day of being abused by the boys when he was not near. "You must look out for yourself now," he said. "If the boys know you won't fight, they will tease you all the time. You must fight."

So the next boy who rudely shoved me aside and knocked my hat off received a painful surprise, for my right fist came so hard against his cheekbone that he stood for a moment as though stunned. Then he moved, and I moved, and the boys standing near could hardly tell which was which until we separated, pretty well bruised. After that the boys were careful not to knock my hat off my head; if they did, they took pains to let me know that it was not intentional.

I told Brush about this set-to, and he approved of it. "That's right," he said; "fight any of them, even if you know that you're

going to get licked; then they won't tease you."

My father was the principal chief of the tribe and leader of the village of the "Make-believe white-men;" he had plenty of horses, the standard of Indian wealth, yet that did not entitle me to a place in any of the different "gangs" in the school; I had to show that I was not afraid to stand up and fight. Even good-natured Brush had to bristle up at times and engage in a lively tussle, else there would have been no peace for him. Now I was wanted by the smaller "gangs" and invited by them to their places of sport; but Brush held on to me and kept me out.

Among the boys there was the "gang," of the "Big Seven" which Brush had been trying to enter; but, for some reason which I did not then understand, they would not admit him. He did not care to go into any of the "gangs" of smaller boys, of which there were quite a number. I thought the "Big Seven" did not want him, because he was too small; but later I found out there was another reason for it.

As time passed, I learned more and more

of the peculiar ways of the boys at the school, of the teachers, and of my books. It was not long before I felt quite at home and independent; but Brush and I were still without a "gang."

Chapter II

Brush

"FRANK, you're learning fast!" said Brush one afternoon as I was laboriously writing my lesson on a slate with his help. "I'm glad; I want you to catch up with me so we can be in the same classes."

I felt proud of his praise and worked all the harder. We had gone through the alphabet swimmingly, and once, when I said it without a break, he slapped me on the shoulder and exclaimed, "That's good!" When I was able to read short sentences, I felt quite sure that I should soon take my place among the advanced pupils.

In and out of school Brush helped me along; in our play and when our work brought us together, he always managed to teach me something of the English language, and I was a willing student because he taught me in a way that made the work a pleasure. Gray-beard, not knowing what a kind and patient assistant he had in Brush,

thought he had in me an exceptionally bright scholar, for I made rapid headway in learning to speak English, won several promotions, and soon found myself in the Second Reader class.

Brush was a bright fellow and quite a student. He and I sat at the same desk in the school-room, side by side at the dining-table, and we were bed-fellows. From him I learned many things he had gleaned from the superintendent's library, for he was a great reader, and the superintendent, who liked the boy, favored him in various ways, loaned him books to read, and talked with him about them.

Of all the stories he used to tell me, and he knew a great many, I liked best to hear him recount the old stories out of the Bible. He was familiar with them all, and told them in a way that delighted me, for he fitted them to my notions. He made them very real. One day he read to me a story, but I could not understand it as well as when he told it in his own simple way, so I asked him not to read them to me any more. The time for the telling of stories was at

night after Gray-beard had gone downstairs to his own rooms, having warned us against loud talking.

My friend always seemed happy, yet at times, particularly on Saturdays, I noticed he would appear sober, almost melancholy. He did not go home as the rest of us did, and I wondered at this very much. He had a way of disappearing about the time I was ready to start home, so I never had a chance to invite him to my house, as I had often intended to do. I tried a number of times to bring him to speak of himself, but he would throw me off that line of talk, and my curiosity went unsatisfied for a long time.

"Say, Brush, where do you live?" I asked one afternoon as we were in the belfry. "You don't go home Saturdays like the rest of us."

"There's a man on the top of the hill near Big Elk's grave," he said evasively as he looked through the spy-glass.

I could see the man with my naked eyes as he stood on the topmost point against the clear, blue sky.

"Take the spy-glass and look at him,"

continued Brush, as though to put off my question.

"Do you live on the other side of that hill?" I persisted.

"Frank, I live here, I don't live anywhere else. This is the only home I have," said the boy sadly. "Do your father and mother ask you who you play with at the Mission?"

"N-o, they never did, maybe they will sometime, I don't know."

"I think they will, that's why I'm going to tell you who I am, then they will know," said Brush, seriously. After a pause he went on, "My father and mother died when I was very small, but I remember my grandfather. He was a very old man. He used to go to your father's house; maybe you have seen him, but I guess you can't remember. He was one of the chiefs, Tae-son' was his name. Once we went to Omaha to buy a lot of things, and coming home we camped just this side of the town; there he died. He was the last relative I had. Now I have no mother, no father, no sister, nothing — no home." He uttered the last word slowly as though thinking. "That's why the Big

Seven — that man 's gone, you take the spy-glass and look for him."

"If you have no home, why don't you go home with me?" I asked, looking through the spy-glass. "I know my father and mother would like you the same as I do."

"If I go home with you, I know I 'll have a good time, but I have n't any home to ask you to. All the boys in the Big Seven do that way."

"I don't care what the Big Seven do, I want you to go home with me."

Saturday came. At breakfast I was anxious to have prayers over, Brush was to go home with me, and we anticipated much pleasure for the day.

"Don't eat much," I whispered to him; "we 're going to eat again when we get home. My mother will give us something good, she always does."

After breakfast Brush went to the barn and filled the stalls with hay for the horses, which was part of the work assigned him. Then he ran up to the superintendent to report, and as soon as he came down we were off.

On the hill we were joined by two white boys, children of one of the Government employees at the mill. "Hello! Going home?" asked one of them. "We're going to the village. They say they're going to have a horse race there to-day. We want to see it."

Instead of taking the well-beaten path to the village, we all turned off into one that led directly to my father's house, and that passed by the burial-place on the bluffs. The two white boys were ahead, and when they came to a freshly made mound surrounded by a neat fence they stopped, and peered between the palings. "Pemmican!" exclaimed one of them. When Brush and I came up, we too looked in and saw on the grave a wooden bowl of pemmican. It was tempting these white boys, for they had learned to like this peculiar food.

"Jack, give me a boost?" said one of them, and soon he was over the fence filling his pockets out of the bowl. Then he offered the remainder to the other boy.

Brush and I were amazed and horrified at this action. We went straight on, taking

no notice of the offer made by the boys to give us some of the stolen food. "I bet one of those boys will die before the year is gone," said Brush, turning and looking back at the irreverent little rascals, who were now tipping their heads backward and putting pinches of the meat into their mouths.

"I bet so too!" I added. "It was awful the way they did. Let's go on fast; I don't want to be with them." And we sped down the hill on a brisk run.

At the door of the house my mother met us and led us into her room. We both began to tell her about the dreadful thing the white boys had done, and expressed the belief that before the year was out one or both of them would die.

We sat down on the floor, and mother placed between us a pretty wooden bowl filled with freshly made pemmican, smiling at our childish notion that food taken after the spirits had tasted it meant death within the year. As we were eating with relish the food placed before us, my mother said, "You do not understand why the bowl of

pemmican was placed on the little grave, and I must tell you. The spirit of the person buried in that grave, or the spirit of any other person dead and buried, cannot eat food; but people love their dead relatives; they remember them and long for their presence at the family gathering: it is this desire that makes them go and put a share of the food on the grave of those who have become nothing, and not the belief that the dead can return and partake of food the same as the living."

We listened with respectful attention as my mother explained to us this custom which arose from the tender longing that prompted the mourner to place on the little mound the food that might have been the share of the loved one who lay under the sod; but I am afraid we failed to grasp the meaning of her words, and clung to the commonplace idea entertained by less thoughtful persons.

In the afternoon there was a general movement throughout the village, men, singly and in groups, walked with stately tread toward the edge of the bluff back of

my father's house. Women, too, no less dignified, made their way in the same direction, followed by their grown-up daughters dressed in their gayest attire, their ornaments glinting in the sun. Little boys and girls chased each other hither and thither as they drifted that way, and soon there was a great gathering of people, all bent upon enjoying the excitement of the race. Brush and I mingled with the boys, and took part in their lively games, as preparations were going on for the sport of the day.

My father was in his corral trying to lasso a young horse to put on the track, a spirited little animal with bald face and large white spots on his sides. When, with some difficulty, he was caught and bridled, he stood pawing the ground, impatient to go, tossing up his head from time to time and moving his ears excitedly. My father led him up to where the people were gathered; other men had already brought their horses there. Boys about Brush's size, lithe of figure, stood by the racers ready to mount when it was time to start.

My father looked around, and finally his

eyes rested upon Brush. "Boy, can you ride?" he asked.

"I can," was the prompt answer.

My breath was fairly taken away at this reply. I did not know that Brush could ride well enough to mount a running horse at a race.

"I want you to ride my horse in this race," said my father.

"All right," replied the lad, taking off his school uniform. In a moment he was ready, stripped naked, with only a breech cloth.

Taking the reins and grasping the horse by the mane, Brush attempted to spring on his back, but the animal, all excited, trotted round and round. Father seized him by the bit, Brush lifted his right foot, father caught it, and in a twinkling the boy was on the horse. The mount was superb; the fiery creature sprang forward at a brisk gallop, but was checked by a skilled hand.

"Give him a canter a short distance; he 'll quiet down," said father. Brush did so and soon returned, the horse prancing about most gracefully.

The course was on the bottom and as smooth as a floor. The twelve horses which were to run were taken to the farther end, about a mile away, and with them went the two men who were to manage the race. When the horses reached the starting point, they were ranged in line, and their riders were told to gallop them slowly and evenly to a point marked on the course. The two men rode along to see that the line was kept fairly; when the marked place was reached, the men shouted, "Ah — hu!" then every boy put his horse on the run.

To us on the hill, the horses looked like small specks in the distance; but, by the sudden rising of a cloud of dust, we knew when the signal was given to run. For a time they were too far away for us to distinguish those in the lead; but, as the horses came nearer, we began to recognize them; two in the front were well ahead, neck and neck.

"It 's the roan!" shouted a tall man.

"No, it 's the bald face!" cried another.

"Hurrah! Brush is in the lead!" yelled the freckled-faced white boy, swinging his

ragged hat in the air as he ran up to where I was standing. "Gee whiz! look at him! look at him! My! I wish I could ride like that!"

Brush leaned forward a little, loosened the reins a bit; the horse gathered fresh speed and gained a length. The boy on the roan leaned forward too, and, raising his right arm, brought down his whip on the flank, the animal bravely sprang forward, but his strength was exhausted, he could do no more. On came the bald face, and reached the goal nearly three lengths ahead.

The men shouted themselves hoarse, and the women, with long-drawn breaths, praised the plucky little rider. Brush trotted up to my father, and delivered the horse.

"Who are you, little brother?" asked father.

For a moment Brush looked embarrassed, then lifting his eyes to father's face answered, "I am Tae-son's grandson and Sas-su's friend."

"Your grandfather was my friend," said my father, looking kindly at the lad; "I am glad you like the company of my boy. You

must always come with him on his visits home from the House of Teaching."

Brush was touched by this recognition, and the tears started to his eyes. Seeing this, I intercepted the white boys who were running toward him. When I thought Brush had had time to master his feelings, I took the two boys to him, and they put their arms around him exclaiming, "Brush, that was grand!"

As this was his first visit to my home Brush did not feel quite easy, and long before the usual hour for my returning to the Mission, he suggested our going back. When we entered the school yard, which was deserted, for the boys and girls had not yet returned, we noticed a woman at the front gate holding a horse by a lariat and close beside her stood a colt mounted by two boys. She called to us and said she wanted to see the superintendent. Brush went to find him, and soon returned with that official.

"Tell the White-chest," said the woman to Brush, "that I have brought my two boys to stay here. They wanted to come, so

I have brought them. Their father is dead; they have been my only comfort; but they want to learn to write. I hope he will be kind to them."

"They are bright-looking boys," said the superintendent, shaking hands with the mother. "I will take good care of them."

The boys dismounted, and the woman prepared to go. She kissed each of the little fellows and wiped a tear from her eyes.

"Don't cry, mother," said the older boy; "we'll be all right. We will come home often to see you."

We watched the mother as she went down the hill, leading her horse and the colt, until she disappeared at a turn on the bottom.

"Well, Brush, here's a job for you and Frank," said the superintendent. "Take these boys to the dormitory and give them a good wash, then bring them to the storeroom, and I will see if I can fit them each with a suit of clothes."

We did as we were told, and while the superintendent was busy fitting the boys, Brush and I went into a large room and

selected a bedstead for them. We put it together alongside of our bed, and began to cord it.

"Brush, why do the Omahas call the missionaries 'White-chests'?" I asked, as I pressed the cord from the foot to the head of the bed to tighten it.

"It 's because the men wear stiff white shirts, and they show on their chests, that 's why," he answered, throwing the mattress on the bed.

Brush and I soon became much attached to Lester and Warren, as the new-comers were named, and we lost no time in helping them along in their English. By our assistance and persistent use of the language with them, the two boys made rapid progress, and it was not long before they were chattering in broken English, like the rest of us.

Chapter III

Edwin

IN one of the little houses of the village of the "Make-believe White-men" there sat on the floor of the room, which served as parlor, kitchen, dining, and bedroom, a man and a woman. There was but one window to the room, and, the weather being warm, the door stood wide open to let in more light for the workers within. The man was cutting with great care a large piece of moistened rawhide into narrow strips to be braided for a long lariat, and from time to time he softly whistled a tune that was running through his head. Directly under the window sat the woman; around her were strewn little workbags, awls, bits of deer-skin, and shreds of sinew. Patiently she worked, pushing the point of the sharp awl through the edges of the leggings she was making, and drawing the finely twisted sinew thread through the perforation.

"We are the only ones in the village who have n't sent any children to the House of

Teaching," said the woman, without looking up from her sewing, continuing a conversation the two were having. "Ma-wa'-da-ne has sent his boy, the only one he has. The man is lame, you know, and needs help; yet he wanted the boy to go, because he thinks some good will come of it to the child in the future. Then look at your friend E-sta'-maza, a man of great knowledge and foresight, he has sent his only boy and three daughters. There must be some good in it; we ought to send one of our boys at least."

The man took up a round stone and whetted his knife; then, as he felt the edge with his thumb, he replied, "I don't want the little one to go. Why don't you send the two big boys; they 're hardly ever home anyway, and they might as well be at the house of the White-chests as anywhere else. What would the house be without the little one? We 'd be very lonely, at least I 'd be."

"I am just as fond of him as you are, and would miss him just as much; but he is the brightest of them all," said the woman, rising and stirring something that was boil-

ing and sputtering in a pot on the stove. "He could learn faster than either of the older boys," she continued. "Before many years have gone, our dealings will be mostly with the white people who are coming to mingle with us; and, to have relations with them of any kind, some of us must learn their language and familiarize ourselves with their customs. That is what these men who send their children to the White-chests are looking forward to, and they love their boys as much as we do ours."

There was silence for some moments. The man fastened the ends of the rawhide strips to a peg in the floor and began to braid them. At length he said, "Where is the boy; he has n't been in all the morning. When do you want him to go?"

"He might as well go now, to-day, the sooner the better. Of course he 's down by the creek with his little bow and arrows."

"Well, wife, I wish you would go and call him. I don't want these strips to dry on me while I am braiding them."

The woman went to the banks of the

little stream that ran by the village, and called in a shrill voice, "Oo-ma'-a-be! Oo-ma'-a-be!"

"I'm coming!" shouted a bareheaded, black-eyed little boy, just as he shot a blue-joint grass arrow at a frog that had poked his head above the surface of the water to see what was going on in the outer world. Forgetting the call, the lad went stealthily on up the stream with another arrow strung, looking for other frogs that might be hunting for flies or mosquitoes, or enjoying the kisses of the warm sunshine in some pleasant nook.

"What can the boy be doing?" said the woman to herself, then she called again, this time emphasizing the first syllable of the name to indicate that she was losing patience, "Oo'-ma-a-be!"

With reluctant steps the boy made his way toward his mother, peering as he went into the tall grass to see if a grasshopper or any other creature might be exposing itself to the arrows of a sport-loving lad.

"Why did you not come when I first called you?" asked the woman as she took

the child by the hand and led him with quickened steps toward the little house.

As the mother and son entered, the father looked up with a pleasant smile, and addressing the boy said, " Your mother went to call you because she wants us to go to the house of the White-chests, where you are to stay and learn to write. Now wash your hands and face, and make yourself look nice, so they will be pleased with you; then we will go."

The mother had the water ready, and began scrubbing the face and neck of the lad, while the candidate for scholarship was pressing his lips tightly together and squinting his eyes to exclude the soap that persisted in getting into them. Then followed the brushing of the hair, which was equally irksome to the boy, and he unconsciously leaned farther and farther away until he was pulled to again by the fond parent.

When both face and hair shone, the mother kissed her boy and announced to her husband that the child was ready. The father rose to go with him, but the boy held back.

"What is it?" asked the father; "are you not willing to go?"

"I am willing to go," answered Oo-ma'-a-be, "but I want to put on my embroidered moccasins and leggings and my little buffalo robe."

The husband and wife looked at each other smiling, and let the youngster have his own way, so he was decked out in his gorgeous costume. He folded himself up in his robe, which was beautifully ornamented with porcupine quills of exquisite colors, he twisted his body and neck to see if he looked well, then said he was ready to go.

In the school-room a class of big boys and girls were learning to read in concert: —

> "The boy stood on the burning deck,
> Whence all but he had fled."

Again and again the teacher made them read the lines, but each time some one would either lag behind or read faster than the others. While this was going on I was busy with my spelling lesson, as my class came after the one now hard at work with the boy "on the burning deck."

There was a click; I raised my eyes and looked toward the door; it slowly opened, then a tall man and a boy silently entered. I recognized them at once; the man was a friend of my father and the lad one of my playmates on my weekly visits home. The class on the floor was dismissed with a lecture on reading, and Gray-beard turned to call, "Next class," when he discovered the man and boy sitting on a bench near the door.

"How do you do, Wa-hon'-e-ga?" said Gray-beard, approaching the Indian with outstretched hand.

"Ka-gae'-ha!" (Friend) responded the Indian, his face brightening. Then in a low tone he called me to him and said, "I have brought your grandfather here to stay with you. Be as good to each other as you have always been, and try to learn the language of the White-chests."

The boy was a distant relative, and, following the peculiar system of kinship among the Indians, there was no impropriety in my addressing him as my grandfather, although we preferred to call each other friend.

"What does Wa-hon'-e-ga want?" asked Gray-beard, putting his hand on my shoulder.

"My friend," replied the Indian, looking with a kindly smile into the face of the teacher, "my wife wishes her son, this boy, to learn to speak the language of the Big-knives, [English] so I have come with him. We have brought him up with great care, and I think he will give you no trouble."

"Tell him," said Gray-beard, "I am very glad he has brought the boy, and we will do our best for him."

The Indian turned and with silent dignity left the room.

"Now, children," said Gray-beard, taking out the school register and looking at us, "we have a new boy here, and we must select a good name for him; what have you to suggest?"

We promptly called him Edwin M. Stanton, and he was registered by that name.

Brush and I were detailed to take Edwin to the store-room and fit him with a new suit of clothes. When he was dressed; we tied up his fine Indian costume in a neat bundle to be returned to his father.

At the supper-table Edwin and I sat together. I showed him how to bow his head when the blessing was asked, and to turn his plate. He silently followed my whispered instructions, and was very quiet while supper was going on, but during the religious exercises which followed, when we dropped on our knees, he became very anxious to know why we did so. He shuffled a good deal in his position, and after a while stood up and looked around. I pulled him down, and he demanded out loud, "What are we hiding for? This is the way we do when we are hiding in the grass."

I gave him a good dig in the ribs. "That hurts!" he cried. I whispered to him to be quiet, but before long he was fidgeting again. Just as the superintendent lowered his voice at an earnest passage in his prayer Edwin spoke out again, in a louder tone than before, "I 've got a dog; he can catch rabbits!"

Gray-beard lifted his head, and the superintendent paused in his fervent appeal and looked toward us; he rapped with his knuckles on the table, and said, in a severe

tone, "Boys, you must be silent and listen when I pray."

I whispered to Edwin that he must keep still until we got out.

As we were going to bed that night Edwin said, "Ka-gae'-ha [Friend], let you and me sleep together; I don't want to sleep with any one else."

Lester too wanted to sleep with me; so it was arranged among us that Brush and Warren should have the double bed, and Edwin, Lester, and I were to have the wide bed for three.

After we had settled down, Edwin began talking, "When we finished eating," he said, "we turned around and the old man began to talk, then you all sang. I like to hear you sing; you've got a good voice. Then we went down on our knees, just as though we were hiding in the grass; what did we do that for? The old man talked a long time; was he telling a story? I know a great many of them; I know one about a dog. He was a man, but he was turned into a dog. I'll tell it to you."

I did n't say anything, so Edwin began:

"Far back in the earliest times there dwelt in a little village a man and his wife. They had only one child living, a son whom they loved to adoration. He was so handsome a youth that whenever he walked through the village all eyes were turned upon him with admiration. One day he asked his mother to make him a separate tent. When it was done he went into it, and there spent four days and nights in solitude, neither eating nor drinking. Then he came out and spoke to his father and mother and said, "I am going away to be gone a long time, perhaps never to return. I go to meet the White-swan, the magician who sent my brothers to the abode of shadows, and, in conflict, with magic opposing his magic, I will destroy him or die as my brothers have died." The father and mother, remembering the fate of their other children, wept and pleaded with their son not to leave them, but he was determined to go.

The young man travelled many days, when one morning he beheld a maiden sitting on the brow of a hill. He went to her and asked why she sat there all alone. With-

out lifting her eyes, modesty forbidding her to return his gaze, the maiden replied, "I go to marry Hi*n*-hpe'-ah-gre." The youth was seized with fear lest the young woman might be the White-swan transformed to beguile him; but being struck by her maidenly bearing, and becoming enamoured of her beauty, he turned aside from suspicion and permitted himself to be persuaded that the fair creature before him was in reality one of his own kind. And so he spoke and said, "I am he, Hi*n*-hpe'-ah-gre, the man whom you seek to follow." In reply the maiden said, "It makes my heart throb with delight to meet and to see with my own eyes the man I am to marry. Sit down and rest your head in my lap, and when the weariness of travel has left you, I shall follow you wherever you may lead." Joy filling the heart of the youth, and no longer troubled with misgivings, he laid his head upon the lap of the maiden and soon fell fast asleep.

"Tha! Tha!" exclaimed the woman, using a word of magic, and four times, in quick succession, she pulled the ears of the

young man. He awoke with a start and attempted to rise, but a transformation had taken place, instead of a man standing upright, he found himself to be a four-footed beast. His body had changed, but his reason was still that of a man. He turned to see his companion, and lo! he beheld, not the beautiful maiden in whose lap he had fallen asleep, but one who looked down upon him with contempt, and whom he knew to be the White-swan. The thought that he had been outwitted came to the young man like a flash, and as swiftly his magic word returned to his mind. He tried to utter it, but he only yelped and gave a dismal howl like that of a dog. A cringing, mangy, lop-eared dog, he now followed the White-swan and — Are you asleep?"

I was almost asleep, so I did not answer him, then he became silent. When I awoke Edwin was gone; I called him but he did not answer. Brush and I went downstairs and called softly in the school-room, but the boy was not there, then we went to the large door of the hall and found it unbolted.

We returned to the dormitory and went to bed, and I soon fell asleep again.

Toward morning I was awakened by strange sounds on the stairs leading up to our dormitory. I recognized the footsteps of a human being, but there were other footsteps that were like those of a four-footed beast. They approached my bed; they came near, and a voice said in Indian in a loud whisper, "Lie down, lie down!"

"Is it you, Oo-ma'-a-be?" I asked.

"Yes, I've been after my dog," he answered, getting into bed with his clothes on.

"Get up and undress; you can't sleep with your clothes on! What did you go after the dog for?"

"I wanted you to see him, and I thought we'd keep him here. He is a fine dog; he can swim too!"

"But were you not afraid? It was dark."

"I forgot all about being afraid, and I went right by that big grave too, — the one they say a ghost comes out of and chases people. I ran, though, all the way to my house. The dog was lying near the door; he

was so glad to see me he almost knocked me down."

It was nearly morning, and we went right off to sleep. Suddenly we were aroused by a furious barking. Brush, Edwin, and I sprang out of bed, and rushed for the dog that with legs spread was defending the top of the stairs.

"Boys, what have you up there?" called Gray-beard from the foot.

"Edwin went after his dog last night," answered Brush. "He wants to keep it here."

"He does, eh! Will it bite?"

"No, it won't bite; you can come up."

Chapter IV

Little Bob

THE afternoon session was over; Gray-beard tapped his bell; we put away our books, folded our arms, and when there was silence the teacher spoke: "Frank will remain here until he finishes correctly the sum he is working on. He has neglected his arithmetic lesson during school hours, so he will have to do the work after school."

Such punishment had not happened to me before. It had frequently come to other scholars, and I had felt sorry for them; but now the disgrace had fallen on me, and I felt it keenly.

Gray-beard led the song about "The Little Brown Church in the Wild Wood," and the whole school sang; but just then I did not care for brown churches or churches of any other color, so my voice did not mingle with that of the other pupils. Then they sang "Lord dismiss us," but as I was not dismissed I did not join in the singing of that familiar hymn.

Brush, Edwin, and the rest of my companions lingered awhile in the school-room to keep me company; but as they had work to do they could not stay long, so I was left alone to struggle with a lot of ugly fractions. My thoughts ran in every direction, off to my home, to the boys at play, and anywhere but on my task. I made a desperate effort to bring myself around to the problem that held me a prisoner by keeping a steady gaze into the deep blue sky through the open window, and then slowly the solution of that detestable sum came to my mind, and I had it. I put it on my slate, compared it with the answer left me by Gray-beard, found it correct, and my work was done.

I arose, put my books away, and stood near the teacher's desk wondering what to do next, when all of a sudden the door burst open and in rushed a little boy, crying. He was without his hat, his coat unbuttoned, and shoestrings untied. Following swiftly on the little chap came a large boy who, for some reason, was angered at the fleeing lad, and was now pursuing to punish him. The little boy ran around the stove, then toward

me and got behind me. The big boy pushed on in his vengeful pursuit, and reached to grasp the object of his anger when I struck at him with my fist. The blow fell on his forehead, he stood for a moment stunned; then he sprang at me; we dealt each other blow after blow, and in our mad charges we knocked over benches and desks. How it happened I do not know, for in my excitement I could not tell where I struck him, or where he struck me, but suddenly my antagonist put his hands to his stomach, doubled over and could not breathe. I became frightened. At length, with a succession of hiccoughs, the boy recovered his breath, picked up his hat, and went out.

I straightened out the benches and desks that we had knocked over, and then sat down to cool off. When I had rested, I called to the round-headed little chap who stood trembling in the corner holding up his trousers, for in his attempts to escape he had lost the buttons to his pants, "What did you do to that boy; what did he want to hit you for?"

"I did n't do nothin'," he answered, hitching up his garments as he came toward me.

"What 's your name?"

"Robert Brown."

"Where you live?"

"In your village, in that little house near Ou-ni-ja-bi's."

"That 's Ne-ma-ha's house."

"Yes, that 's my father."

And so it was the son of that man for whom I was all bruised up.

Ne-ma-ha was the poorest man in my father's village, and had no recognition among the prominent men of the tribe, although he had been the priest or hereditary keeper of the sacred tent of war. It was only by the performance of valorous deeds that men won honors in the tribe; but this man had no ambition to win such honors. As a hunter he was also a total failure, consequently his worldly possessions were not such as could give him distinction. Like his brother, who was struck by lightning, he deserted his sacred charge through craven superstitious fear, and, having lost his

priestly position, he had become a useless member of the tribe.

"What's your Omaha name?" I asked, as I pinned his trousers to his suspenders with sharp sticks and nails.

"They call me Hae-th'na'-ta," he replied, wiping his face with the end of his coat sleeve.

The youngster belonged to the Elk band of the tribe, hence the boy's name, the English translation of which is, horns forked, meaning the forked-horned elk. How he came by his English name I do not know.

From this time on the lad was always near me, and gradually became my devoted follower. Although at first I did not care for him much, he finally won my friendship by his faithfulness and good nature. He always assisted me as far as his strength would permit in the work assigned me about the school; thus it was that Little Bob, as he was familiarly known, became a satellite to the group to which I belonged, and so safe from the attacks of the other boys.

Brush, Edwin, Warren, Lester, and I were

now recognized by all the boys of the school as a "gang," and were spoken of as "the Middle Five." We had fallen into this close companionship without any formal arrangement, and we were regarded as the strongest group between the Big Seven and the other "gangs."

Chapter V

Warren

BRUSH was a genius as a whittler. He had only one tool, and that was a rusty jack-knife with a single broken blade, and that blade was kept sharp almost to the keenness of a razor. He would take a shapeless piece of wood, cut here, cut there, scrape at one place, then at another, and go through a series of twists and turns of his strong, deft hands, and at last, with a triumphant smile, hold up to view a wooden horse, buffalo, or some other animal. He had just now finished a little plough which he had been carving for some time, and we, the Middle Five, sat in the shade of a tree noisily discussing the accuracy of the work.

"Brush, that 's pretty good, it 's just like the ploughs I've seen," I remarked as I passed the toy to Edwin.

"'Tain 't good," said Edwin, after he had examined it a while. "I think the handles are too straight."

"This ought to be kind of crooked, come

down like this," put in Lester, indicating with his finger the outline of the beam as it should have been, according to his notion.

Our heads were close together looking at the plough, when a sudden consciousness as of the presence of something disagreeable stole upon us. A sound like the snapping of a twig made us all look up, and there stood Jim, a big boy, one of the worst that ever entered our school, and who had been excluded from all the "gangs" on account of his vicious, meddlesome disposition. With a contemptuous grin, he passed his eyes from one boy to the other, as though to discern the character of each one. When this unpleasant stare fell upon Warren, he bristled up, gave back a defiant look, and kept it steadily upon the unwelcome visitor. Without relaxing the mirthless smile, so characteristic of him, Jim addressed the boy, "Warren, I just come from the spring, where a lot of boys was talking. I heard Gid say that he could lick you. I told him I 'd come and tell you what he said. Then he says, 'I don't care, I ain't 'fraid of him!'"

"You go and tell Gid," said Warren,

springing to his feet, "I can lick two like him, and I'll show him any time he wants me to."

The mischief-maker had read well the character of Warren, and had won from him the expected reply.

We resumed our examination of the plough thinking that our interview with the tale-bearer had ended. Jim thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked uneasily about; he came to where little Bob was sitting, and, pulling out a warty hand, he pointed his finger at the boy's face, making a hissing sound between his teeth. Jim never passed by a chance to tease a smaller boy. Bob put his hands to his face and began crying. We all rose to our feet; Edwin moved forward in a threatening attitude, and said, "Jim, you let that boy alone. What you want to tease him for?"

Jim turned away, looked up into a tree, threw a stone at a bird, and then slowly sauntered off.

We sat down again to resume our talk about Brush's little plough, but our minds seemed to turn in another direction.

"I don't want Warren to fight Gideon," said Edwin; "he's a bad fellow, that Gideon is. He don't fight fair."

"But he can't back out," spoke up Lester, "and I don't want him to. I don't want the rest of the boys to think he's 'fraid."

"Warren's got to fight Gid," exclaimed Brush. "If he only kept quiet and did n't say anything when Jim told him what Gid said, it would be all right and no fight; but now everybody knows what Warren said, and he can't back out without the boys thinking he's a coward. We will see that Gid fights fair, and, if he don't, we will thrash his whole 'gang.' Warren can use his arms and fists all right; but he can't wrestle very good. Frank, you'd better show him some of those new holds."

Warren and I took several rounds in which I showed him a number of new tricks I had learned from a good wrestler. There was quite an important one of which he was ignorant; I gave him some lessons in that; then we sat down to talk over the challenge again with the rest of the boys.

"I think Warren can throw Gid right

easy," I said; "if he can remember that waist and chin trick, and the way to break it, he can down Gid every time."

"Remember that!" warned Lester, looking at his brother. "If Gid plays that waist and chin trick, you do just what Frank showed you to do to break it."

While we were talking, we heard the slapping of bare feet upon the hard ground, and soon a boy appeared before us, imitating the actions of a spirited horse. "Whoa'p! Whoa'p!" he called repeatedly, as with loud snorts the imaginary steed reared and plunged about; finally the excited animal came to a standstill. Looking at Warren, the boy said, "Gid told me to come and tell you, he will meet you down below the barn, at the east gate, right after school this afternoon. He told me to tell you again he can lick you good."

After some prancing about, the boy ran off, clapping his hips with his hands to imitate the sound of galloping hoofs.

Gideon had accepted Warren's challenge, and we had no misgivings as to the outcome, for we had every confidence in Warren's

courage and strength. What concerned us most was Jim's meddling with us and the means by which we could prevent his farther interference with our peace. He had made trouble with other "gangs" just in this way. We were still discussing this matter when the school-bell rang, and we went to the house together.

The boys who had already taken their seats looked up at us as we entered the school-room, then they turned their glances upon Gideon to see how he would behave. The two boys, Gideon and Warren, stared at each other defiantly; the rest saw there was no courage lacking in either, and they expected a lively battle between the two. Jim pretended to be studying; but we knew that he was closely watching the victims of his machinations to see how they would act. Jim never studied; he was always at the foot of his class, and boys younger than he were far in advance of him.

At last the monotonous recitations came to an end. We sang a song about "Pretty little zephyrs," then Gray-beard closed the school with the usual religious exercises.

The boys gathered in groups and walked down to the place designated for the combat. We followed slowly, as we wanted time to give all the instructions necessary to Warren. A large ring had been formed by the boys, and Gid was already in the centre with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up. Jim glanced at us as though impatient for our coming. As we neared the ring, some one said, in a voice loud enough for us to hear, "They're not coming very fast. I guess they're 'fraid!"

Brush stepped hastily forward and asked, "Who said we're afraid? Whoever said it, let him come out here and I'll show him whether we're afraid or not!"

No one answered. There were few boys in the school who would without fear accept a challenge from Brush.

A place was cleared for us, and Warren, after handing me his coat, entered the ring. The two boys approached each other and stopped within a few feet.

"Did you tell Jim you could lick me?" asked Warren, looking his opponent square in the eye.

"Yes. And I can do it too," was the bold reply.

"You can't do it!" exclaimed Warren, striking Gideon in the chest.

Then followed an exciting scene. Gideon rushed at Warren, and aimed blow after blow at his face, but our boy skilfully parried each attack. Round and round within the ring the two boys carried on their strife, neither one prevailing. For a while no serious blows were dealt, finally, in an unguarded moment Warren received a hard thrust in the left side which made him gasp; whereat Gid's gang shouted in chorus, "Choo-ie!" (An exultant exclamation in Omaha.) After this success Gideon grew reckless and struck wildly, and Warren was a little too anxious to put in a good hit before the proper moment. Gid made another effort at his antagonist's ribs, but the blow fell short; then Warren made a lunge at Gid's face; he dodged, but not quickly enough to save his ear from a bad scraping from Warren's knuckles. "Choo-ie!" cried Lester and the rest of us at this success; but Gid's next movement threw us into dismay, he had

suddenly seized Warren around the waist while his arms were uplifted. Gid put his chin against Warren's chest and began pulling in his back. Warren tried to twist Gid's neck; but there was no use in that, Warren was slowly giving way. If he should fall the battle would be won by Gideon.

"Put your arms under his and push!" I said to Warren in an undertone. I could n't help doing it.

Isaac, a blustering little chap and one of Gid's "gang" overheard me; stepping forward and pointing his finger at me, he angrily exclaimed, "Frank, you know that ain't fair, we don't do that way."

"You do worse than that," I retorted. "The whole four of you jumped on me in the school-room; that was n't fair, but I licked you! Wait till Warren and Gid get through, then I 'll see you!"

Warren had heard my words, and acted on them at once, and so released himself from Gideon's dangerous grasp. Then they went to sparring again. In making a thrust Warren stumbled on a round stone and fell on one knee, before he could rise Gid put

in a blow that cut Warren's under lip. "Choo-ie!" exclaimed the friends of Gid. It seemed for a moment as though the victory would be against us. The struggle now became desperate. Gid was blowing hard, but there was still considerable reserve of strength in Warren. Gid repeatedly tried to grasp his antagonist's waist, but was every time cleverly brought about again to fists.

Warren's shirt front was bloody and his short hair stood straight up, giving him a frightful aspect. Gid's thrusts and parries now grew visibly weaker, but he showed no signs of yielding. He lowered his fists to give an under cut, thus leaving his face unguarded, quick as a flash Warren's right arm shot out, and with a sickening thud his fist landed square on Gid's nose. The blood spurted; the boy was stunned, and, before he could recover, he received another blow on the eye.

The fight was ended, and Gid's friends dragged him away more dead than alive.

Warren came to us smiling as widely as his swollen lip would permit.

"You did first rate, old boy!" said Brush, slapping Warren's back.

"He'll never want to fight you again," added Lester.

I helped Warren to put on his coat, then I looked around to see where Edwin was. I saw him standing before Jim, who was watching us with his wicked grin. They both spoke, but I could not hear them for the noise of the talk around me. Suddenly Edwin's long arm darted out, his fist came square on Jim's cheek with a resounding whack. Jim's face became livid, and the spot upon which the blow fell twitched convulsively. When the natural color returned to his face, Jim deliberately pulled off his coat; he was going to fight Edwin. It was an uneven match; Jim stood a head taller and was heavier than Edwin.

"What's the matter?" asked Brush, as he came up; "what are you going to do?"

"We're going to fight," replied Edwin; "I hit him because he made that trouble."

"Jim," said Brush, stepping forward and rolling up his sleeves, "I don't think it would be unfair for two of us to fight you.

You are bigger than any of us, so I am going to help Edwin to thrash you. You 've been making mischief for others, now it 's going to come to you."

The boys gathered around the three to see another fight, but were disappointed. Jim made no further demonstration, but stood looking at the two boys; at last he muttered something to himself, and, picking up his coat, pushed his way out of the crowd.

All the boys pointed their fingers at Jim, and shouted, "Ah, coward!" Jim turned his head and looked at them sulkily, but went on, and no one cared to follow him.

Chapter VI

Lester

THE hands of the little clock on Gray-beard's desk indicated the hour of two. The midsummer's sun hurled its rays with unrelenting force to the earth, and the wind, as though consenting to the attack, withheld its refreshing breezes. All the windows of our school-room were thrown wide open, and the hum of busy insects and the occasional cry of a bird were the only sounds that relieved the monotonous stillness outside.

A class, with Warren at the head, was on the floor. The girl at the foot was reading in a tone that made it difficult to resist the drowsiness that attacked every one in the room. She came to a hard word, and, according to our custom, she spelled it. Gray-beard, who was sitting with eyes shut, pronounced it for her through a suppressed yawn. A few more words brought her to the end of the paragraph.

A long pause followed; Warren stood with book uplifted, but was gazing intently on

something outside. The teacher, recovering from an overbalancing nod, opened his eyes slowly, and lazily called, "Warren!" The boy did not stir. Brush and I looked up from our desk, and shuffled our feet to attract his attention. "Warren!" again called Gray-beard, in a louder tone. Still there was no response.

Brush tore a fly-leaf out of his book, rolled it hastily into a ball, and threw it at Warren's head, but missed it.

Gray-beard turned in his chair, his eyes rested upon the boy, who was still looking fixedly out of the window. Then he rose, stepped softly up to Warren, seized him by the shoulders and shook him violently, saying, "Are you asleep?"

"Swarming!" rang out the last word of the sentence which Warren was making a desperate effort to utter.

Gray-beard, following the eyes of the lad, looked out of the window, "Quick, boys, to the dining-room, take anything you can make a noise with!" he exclaimed, as he sprang to the door, threw it open with a bang and disappeared.

We leaped over desks, and tumbled over each other as we rushed with impetuous haste to the dining-room. Brush caught up an enormous tin pan, Edwin a milk pail, and I the school triangle; the rest of the boys took tin pans and plates, or whatever they could lay their hands on, and we all ran out into the yard. Warren was already following the humming black cloud, ringing the school-bell with all his might. We caught up with him, and began beating on the tin pans with our knuckles, keeping up a constant yelling like a lot of savages. The noise we made was enough to drive the bees and ourselves insane. It was bedlam let loose. On we went through the barnyard, up the hill, and into the woods, closely following the flying black mass. Three boys carrying small mirrors kept throwing flashes of light into the swarm.

The bees made a straight line for a tall oak, hovered over the end of a high branch, and then settled on it. We gathered around the tree, and continued our unearthly noise until Gray-beard, with a box and a saw on his shoulder, and a coil of rope on his

arm, came up puffing and all in a perspiration.

"Have they settled?" he asked, shading his eyes and looking up into the tree.

"Yes, there they are," answered Brush, pointing to the writhing black mass on the branch.

"Who can climb?" said Gray-beard, looking around among the boys. No one answered. After a while Edwin spoke up, "Lester climb tree like wild-cat."

Lester turned and looked daggers at him. Brush and I nudged each other and giggled. Edwin was playing a joke on Lester.

"Come," said Gray-beard, "there's no time to be lost." And he proceeded to tie the end of the rope around the waist of Lester, who had not recovered from his astonishment and was given no time to put in a disclaimer to the title of climber.

Gray-beard lifted the lad up as high as he could, then the boy began to climb. He went up slowly but surely, dragging the rope after him. Edwin shouted words of encouragement. "That's good, go ahead!"

he would exclaim as the climber made now and again six inches or so.

"Wait till I get down, I show you!" Lester called back. Then Edwin turned to us and grinned.

The limb upon which the bees had settled was at last reached; the boy pulled up the hand-saw that was tied to the other end of the rope. He looked down at us with mischief in his face, then straddled the branch with his face toward the trunk of the tree and began to saw. Gray-beard, seeing this, called up in great excitement, "Stop! stop! Lester, stop! Turn the other way." The boy, having had his fun, turned, and, moving as near to the bees as he dared, began sawing slowly until the branch hung down, then he severed it. It did not fall because before he began to saw he had tied one end of the rope near to the bees, and had fastened the other part near to the place where he was sitting, so that he was able gradually to lower the bees to the ground.

We did not know that anything had happened to Lester until he came down, then we saw that he was stung on the

eyebrow and his face was swollen. Brush moistened a bit of earth and smeared it around the injured part to prevent further swelling, but it did no good.

Gray-beard put the box over the bees and began pounding the top, "Look under there, Frank, and see if they are going up," he said; "if the queen goes, they will all go."

I crouched to the ground and looked into the box; there was great activity and noise. "I think they are going up," I said.

Suddenly the pounding on the box ceased; I heard an outcry and a groan; I looked up, and there was Gray-beard rolling on the ground. He was badly stung in the face. Brush went to his assistance and painted his wounds with mud. I went to the box and pounded as Gray-beard had done.

"Look under, Warren, and see what they are doing," I said.

Warren put his head to the ground and looked, "I guess that old king went up; they 're all gone," he said; "I can't see them."

Having recaptured our bees, we securely fastened the box so that the wind could

not blow it over; we gathered up our pans, milk pails, and bells and formed a homeward procession. Brush headed it, leading Graybeard, whose eyes were now both closed and bandaged with his white handkerchief, and in this way we reached the Mission building.

The ladies and the school girls were waiting on the porch for our return, and as we approached the gate a number called out, "How many of you are stung?"

"Two!" cried the boys; "teacher and Lester."

When we were passing the girls on the porch to go to our quarters, pretty little black-eyed Rosalie, my sweetheart, came up to me and asked, "Frank, was you stung?"

"No; but the bees would n't go in the box for anybody but me," I answered proudly.

"But I wish you was stung like Lester," she said; "his girl is telling the rest of them all about it, and they think he 's right smart because he got stung."

Some of the big girls, overhearing this confidence, put their aprons up to their faces to hide their laughter. The teachers never

knew that there were lovers among the pupils and that little romances were going on right under their eyes.

Gray-beard could not see us to bed that night, so the superintendent took his place.

"Good-night, boys, keep quiet and go to sleep," he said as he went downstairs after he had heard us say our prayer.

"Warren, you 've earned ten cents to-day," said Brush; "I think Lester earned something too. I don't know how much it 's going to be, but I 'll go and see the superintendent about it to-morrow."

"Say, Brush, I think that bee that stung Lester was a drone; that 's why his face is all swelled up," I said.

"Oh! go 'long!" he answered. "Whoever heard of a drone having a sting. They have no sting, and they can't sting. It 's only the working bees that have a sting."

"But those drones are big fellows, two times as big as the working bees. The superintendent showed me one when he was moving a swarm to a new box in the bee house."

"They have n't any sting, though. There

are three kinds of bees: there 's the queen, then there 's the drone, and there 's the working bees. When the drones get too many, and eat too much, the working bees, they get mad and they sting them to death."

"I think that work bee thought Lester was drone," remarked Edwin.

"Wait till I get well," threatened Lester; "I 'll show you drone!"

"What is the queen?" asked Warren. "And what does it do?"

"Why a queen is a female king," explained Brush, who was authority on a great many things. "She does n't do anything but sit on a big throne and tell people what to do. If they don't mind her, she makes her soldiers cut their heads off. It 's the same with bees: they have a queen, — I don't think she sits on a throne, but she tells the rest of the bees what to do; and if they don't mind her, she gets up and goes; then all the rest have to follow her, because they won't know what to do unless she tells them. That 's what that old queen did today."

"Why don't the 'Mericans have a king?"

asked Edwin. "They got a President, but I don't think he 's big like a king."

"They had one," said Brush; "but they did n't like him, because he put a terrible big tax on tea. The 'Mericans are awfully fond of tea, and when they saw they 'd have to pay the trader and the king, too, for their tea, they got mad; and one night, when everybody was asleep, they painted up like wild Indians, and they got into a boat and paddled out to the tea ship and climbed in. They hollered and yelled like everything, and scared everybody; then they spilted the tea into the ocean."

"What did the old king do?" asked Lester.

"Well, he was hopping mad, and he lifted his great big sceptre, and he went up to the man that brought the news, and knocked him over. Then he walked up and down talking loud, and when he got tired he went to his throne and sat down hard."

"What is a sceptre?" I asked, interrupting the story.

"Why, it 's something like a war club; when the king tells people to do things, he

shakes it at them, so they will get scared and mind what he says."

"I would n't mind him," said Warren; "I'd make a big sceptre for myself and shake it at him."

"Well," continued Brush, "the old king sat still for a long time; then he said to his soldiers, you go and fight those 'Mericans. And they did fight, and had the Rev'lution. That war lasted eight years, and the king's soldiers got licked. Then the 'Mericans made General George Washington their President because he could n't tell a lie."

The next morning Brush went to the superintendent's study, and soon came out calling for Warren and Lester. Edwin and I waited under the walnut-tree in front of the school. When the three came to us, they showed us a bright silver dime and an equally bright quarter of a dollar. According to our notions, Warren and his brother were rich, the former having earned the reward offered for the discovery and report of the swarming of the bees, and the latter earning the quarter by climbing the tree on which the swarm had settled.

Brush announced to us that Lester and Warren had been detailed to go after the mail. The post-office was in the trader's store three miles away from the school, and boys were always very glad to be sent on this errand.

In the afternoon, when school was out, Brush went up to the superintendent's room to borrow the spy-glass, while Edwin and I went in search of Lester and Warren, who had slipped away from us. We could not find them, so we returned to the school-room, where we met Brush, and we all went up to the belfry.

The Indians were at work in their fields, and we each took the glass in turn to see if we could recognize our friends. Suddenly Edwin said, "Something's going to happen; look at those girls."

Two girls were going through the yard arm in arm, now and again glancing over their shoulders toward the boys' play-ground. They reached the farthest corner of the yard, then turned and looked along the dividing fence. Two boys sauntered towards them on the other side, following a narrow path.

"There's Lester and Warren," said Brush; "they're up to something, keep your eyes upon them."

We did. The four met at the corner, sat down and appeared to be talking to each other. When they had been there for some time, the boys handed through the palings to each of the girls a brown parcel.

"I see now why those boys wanted to go after the mail this morning," said Brush.

The girls arose and walked toward the house, opening their parcels, and we saw through the spy-glass that they were eating candy. The boys slowly returned, one following the other along the narrow path. Edwin thrust his fingers into his mouth and whistled, imitating the cry of the robin, which was the signal we five had adopted. The boys stopped suddenly as the sound reached them, and looked all around. Seeing no one, they went on. Again Edwin whistled; then I touched the bell very lightly with the clapper. The boys looked up to the belfry; but we kept out of sight.

At breakfast the next morning the two girls appeared at the table with their hair

neatly done up in bright-colored ribbons. Edwin leaned over toward Lester and said in a whisper, "Your girl's got a right pretty ribbon!"

"Yours has n't got any!" retorted Lester.

Chapter VII

The Splinter, the Thorn, and the Rib

"OH! oh! oh! Aunt, that hurts. Oh!"

"Keep still, now, keep still! You have a big stick in your toe, and I must take it out. If you keep pulling like that, I might run the point of this awl into your foot."

I lay flat on my back on the ground with my sore foot in the lap of this good woman whom I called Aunt, while she probed the wound to withdraw a splinter. After considerable wincing on my part, the cause of my agony was removed and held to view. The splinter was long and very large; the relief was great, and already I felt as though I could walk without limping. The kind woman took from her work-bag a bit of root, chewed it, and put it on my sore toe; then she bandaged the foot with a piece of white cloth which also came from the handy bag.

My Aunt laid the splinter on a piece of

wood and cut it into fine bits, just as I had seen men cut tobacco for smoking. "Now," said she, as she scattered the bits in every direction, "that thing cannot do any more harm. But what is this?" she asked, holding the old bandage up between the tips of her thumb and index finger of her right hand, and in her left the bit of pork that had been tied on my toe.

"Why, Aunt," I replied, "that thing in your right hand is the old bandage, and that in your left is the pig-fat that was put on my toe."

"Why did they put pig-fat on your poor sore toe; who put it on? Bah! It's nasty!" she exclaimed, as she threw it away as far as she could.

"The white woman who takes care of the children at the school put it on to draw the splinter out."

"To draw the splinter out!" she repeated in a tone of contempt. Then she tossed up her fine head, gave shouts of laughter, and said between the paroxysms; "Oh! this is funny! This is funny! Your White-chests might as well hitch a bit of pig-fat to their

wagon and expect it to draw a load up the hill! And how long has this pig-fat been tied on your foot?"

"About four days."

"Without bathing the foot and renewing the bandages?"

"Yes."

"If this white woman takes as much care of the other children as she has of you,—I'm sorry for them. No children of mine should be placed under her care,—if I had any."

My Aunt gathered her awl, knife, and other little things into her work-bag; I looked all about to see if any boys were watching, then I put my arms around her dear neck and kissed her.

"Are you going to see my mother to-day?" When she answered yes, I said, "Tell her to come and see me,—very soon."

"I will; but don't keep her running over here all the time," and she started to go. She had not gone very far when she turned and shouted to me, "Wash your foot to-morrow morning and turn the bandage over. You will be well in a day or two."

A boy passing by cried out, "Bell has rung!" and I limped into the school-room to attend the afternoon session.

When school was out, Lester suggested that we go on the hill to sit and talk. Turning to me, he asked if I could walk as far as that; I assured him that I could, so I hobbled along with the boys up the hill. We found a beautiful grassy spot, and three of us — Lester, Warren, and I — lay down and looked up into the deep blue sky. Brush sat near by, carving a horse's head out of a piece of oak. Clouds lazily floated far above.

"Say, Lester," I called, "you take that one that looks like a buffalo; Warren, you take that one that is shaped like a bear; and I will take this one that's like a man smoking a pipe. Now, let's rub them out!"

So, fixing our eyes upon the clouds, we began rubbing the palms of our hands together.

"Mine is getting smaller, right away, now!" cried Warren.

"Mine too!" echoed Lester.

Brush gave us a look of disgust, and

said, "Boys, I think you are the biggest fools I ever saw, — rubbing out clouds, the idea!"

But we rubbed away, and paid no attention to the contemptuous glances our friend gave us. My hands began to come down lower and lower; and then I felt myself rising from the ground, higher and higher I went, just like a big bird, and suddenly landed on a heavy black cloud. I looked down; there were the boys still rubbing away, and Brush still carving. I could see the winding river far below and the birds flitting about. I wondered what it all meant. I felt the cloud moving away with me; the boys were growing smaller and smaller, and I noticed that I was passing over the Indian village. Where is the cloud going with me, and will it ever stop? I heard a sound that seemed familiar to me, — is it a bell? Could there be bells in the cloud? I asked myself.

"Wake up, you fools! Supper-bell has rung! Rubbing out clouds, were you!" said Brush, in derisive tones.

Warren sat up, blinking his eyes, and asked, "Where are we?"

That night, when the boys had settled down in their beds and Gray-beard had gone downstairs, Edwin asked, "Boys, where 've you been this afternoon? You came to supper late; Gray-beard looked hard at you."

"We 've been up the hill," I answered; "I told the boys to hurry along and leave me; but they would n't."

"Who was that Indian woman talking to you before dinner-time?"

"That was my aunt; she saw me when she was going by, and she made me sit down and she looked at my foot. She took a great big splinter out of my toe. My! it hurt."

"You 're going to get well now. Why did n't you put that splinter in some buffalo hair, then 't would 've turned into a baby."

"Nonsense!" said Brush, "who ever heard of such a thing."

"There 's a story like that," replied Edwin.

"Tell that story! tell that story!" cried the boys in chorus.

"But you don't listen; you go to sleep, or you ask fool questions and stop me."

"We won't stop you; we're going to lie awake."

"All right. I'll tell you that story. Say 'ong!' pretty soon, then I'll know you're awake."

We all snuggled down, then in chorus cried, "Ong!" and Edwin began:

"'Way long time ago, four brothers lived on earth. Good hunters, they shoot straight, kill deer, buffalo, elk, and all kinds of animals. They got plenty of meat and skins. One night, the youngest man came home very lame; his foot was all swelled up; he had to use his bow for a cane, and he was groaning, groaning all the time. He lay down and was real sick, one, two, three days. The other men, they went hunting. When they were gone, the youngest man got up, took his knife, cut open his toe, and took out a big thorn, a great big —"

Whack! whack! whack! Quick as a flash the boys put their feet against the foot-board and pulled the bedclothes taut so that the rest of the blows fell harmless upon us. We had been surprised by Gray-beard. Edwin, in his earnestness, and in his belief

that a foreign language can be better understood when spoken loudly, had been shouting his story in a voice that reached Gray-beard and woke him up. After warning us against loud talking, the old man went downstairs as stealthily as he had come.

"Well, boys," said Brush, "that came like a cyclone, did n't it?"

We all agreed that it did.

"Frank, did he hurt your foot?" asked Warren.

"No, the boys kept the quilt up, so he could n't hit me."

"What did I say last?" asked Edwin.

"You said," I reminded him, "that he cut open his toe and took out a big thorn."

"Oh, yes," he continued; "he took out a big thorn, a great big thorn. He wanted to show it to his brothers, so he pulled out some buffalo hair from his robe and put the thorn inside and laid it away, way back in the middle of the tent. Then he went after some water to wash his foot. When he was coming back, he heard something crying like

everything; not like raccoon, not like any kind of bird or animal, something different. He stood still and listened; it sounded like coming from inside the tent! So he went slow, easy, and looked in the tent; there was something moving and crying loud. Then the young man went inside the tent, and he saw a baby, a little girl baby, and no thorn. He knew that thorn had turned into a girl baby, crying like everything. The young man was very glad; he danced on his one well foot; he took up the girl baby in his big arms and moved like a tree when the wind blows, and he sang soft, and the girl baby shut her eyes and went to sleep, e-a-s-y, — just like you!"

"No! We ain't asleep. Go on."

"Well, those big brothers came home, and they were all very glad. They took the girl baby all round. Then the oldest brother, he said, 'She is going to be our sister. I wish she would grow right up and run round the tent.' Then he lifted her four times, and the girl baby grew quick, and ran round the tent, talking. Then another brother, he said, 'I wish my sister would grow up and get

big enough to go after water.' Then he lifted the little girl four times, and she got big enough to go after water. Then the next one, he said, 'I wish my sister would grow big enough to make moccasins and cook and make lots of things.' Then he lifted her four times, and the girl grew right up and knew how to make lots of things. Then the youngest man, he said, 'I wish my sister grown up woman now.' Then he lifted her four times, and she was a big woman right away. So in one night that thorn girl baby grew up, and she was the first woman."

"Why!" said Brush, "that's just like the Bible story of Adam and Eve. You remember it says, that Adam was the first man God made, and He put him in a big garden full of flowers and trees. He told him he could eat everything there except the berries of only one tree, and He showed him that tree. God made Adam go to sleep, and then He cut open his side and took out one rib, and out of that bone He made a woman, and He named her Eve."

"Did He whittle that rib bone just like

you whittle a piece of wood and make men, and horses, and dogs, and other things?" asked Lester.

"Yes, I think He did. Then in that garden there were elephants, and lions, and tigers, and camels, and lots of other animals; but they didn't eat each other up. God gave Adam the camels to ride, so he would n't get tired. Camels ride easy, easier than a horse. You know a horse goes trot! trot! trot! and makes your stomach ache; but a camel goes just as e-a-s-y, like rocking, like that boat, you know, when we went on the river and the wind blew, and the boat went up and down. Why, you know, the difference is just like this: you ride in a big wagon and it shakes you like everything; you ride in the superintendent's carriage, and it rides just as easy as anything."

"How do you know?" broke in Warren. "You never rode a camel, and you never rode in the superintendent's carriage."

"Yes, I have too. I 've ridden in the superintendent's carriage that time I went to interpret for him down to the big village. I rode with him in his carriage."

"You boys said you would n't stop my story," protested Edwin, yawning.

"Say, Brush," I asked, "when that bone was whittled, and it became Eve, what did she do?"

"Well, one morning she went down to the creek to swim, and, just as she was going to step into the water by a big willow-tree, she saw a snake in the tree with a man's head on, and the snake —"

"It was n't a snake," interrupted Warren; "it was the serpent, the Sunday-school teacher said so."

"Well, it 's the same thing, — the snake and the serpent is the same thing."

"No, they 're not. The serpent is the kind that 's poisonous, like the rattle-snake; and the snake is like those that don't poison, like the garter-snake and the bull-snake."

"Brush, go on with your story," I broke in impatiently. "Don't mind Warren; he does n't know anything!"

"No, he does n't. Well, the serpent was Satan, and Sa —"

"How can Satan be a serpent and a

snake?" asked Lester. "First you said it was a snake; then you said it was a serpent; now you say it was Satan!"

"You boys are bothering my story all the time. I'm going to stop."

"Go on, Brush," I urged; "don't mind those boys; what do they know? They're all way back in the Second Reader, and you are in the Fifth, and I am in the Third."

"All right, I'll go on; I don't care what they say. Well, the Devil spoke to Eve and said —"

"Your snake has turned into a Devil now," sneered Edwin. "Boys, why don't you let me go on with my story; Brush does n't know how to tell a story."

"Yes, I do too. Boys, you don't know anything; you don't know that the Devil and Satan and the serpent and the snake are the same thing; they're all the same. If you would listen when the teacher talks to you in the school-room, and when the minister speaks to us in the chapel, you would learn something. All you got to do is to listen, but you don't. When you are forced to sit still, you go to sleep; and when

you are awake you tickle those that are asleep with straws, or stick pins in them. How are you going to learn anything when you do like that? You must listen; that's what I'm doing. I want to know all about these things so I can be a preacher when I get big. I'm going to wear a long black coat, and a vest that buttons up to the throat, and I'm going to wear a white collar, and a pair of boots that squeaks and reaches to my knees, and — "

"Edwin, go on with your story, I want to hear that," called Warren.

"He's asleep," said I.

"Only last Sunday," resumed Brush, "the minister told us that the Devil went about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may de — de — What's the rest of that word, Frank?"

"Vour."

"Yes, 'vour, devour. The Devil went about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."

"Bully for you, Brush!" exclaimed Lester. "That's good; you did n't cough big though, like the preacher does."

"Don't make fun of the old man, boys, he is here to help us; he wants to do us good."

"Yes," answered Warren; "I guess he wanted to do you good last week, when he switched your back for you!"

"I think I deserved it."

"No, you did n't. You did n't do anything; you only threw Phil Sheridan down and made his nose bleed."

"I should n't have done it. I saw a good chance and I did it, and the old man was looking at me. Now, boys, what did the preacher mean when he said the Devil went around like a roaring lion?"

"I s'pose," said Edwin, "he means the Devil is like some of our big medicine men who can turn themselves into deer and elk, and any kind of animal, and the Devil can change himself into a hungry, howling lion and —"

"And into a Satan," suggested Lester.

"And into a serpent," added Warren.

"Into a snake," I chimed in.

"And put a man's head on!" ejaculated Edwin.

"And talk to women when they go swimming!" said Lester, with a laugh.

"There 's no use talking to you boys. I 'm going to sleep," and Brush turned over.

One by one, sleep overcame these boys. Brush made a peculiar noise as he breathed, and Lester puffed away like a steamboat.

A whippoorwill sang in one of the cottonwood-trees near the corner of the house. Fainter and fainter grew the sound, and so the day passed into yesterday, and the morrow began to dawn.

Chapter VIII

Fraudulent Holidays

"THIRD Reader," called Gray-beard, and some ten or twelve boys and girls marched to the place of recitation, and put their toes on a straight crack in the floor. The reading lesson was some verses on "Summer," prettily illustrated with a picture of a boy and a dog, the lad racing over a meadow, and the dog frisking at his side.

"Now, Robert, begin!" said Gray-beard to little Bob, who in some unaccountable way had reached the head of the class.

The boy put his index finger on the first word, and slid it along as he read, in a low, sing-song tone, "Come, come, come, the Summer now is here."

"Read that over again," said Gray-beard. "Read it loud, as though you were out of doors at play."

Bob read again, but in the same manner, and had hardly gone through half the line when the sharp crack of Gray-beard's ruler on the desk made us all jump.

"That's not the way to read it!" he exclaimed with some impatience; and he repeated the lines to show how they should be given. "Now, begin again."

Bob began, but in the same lifeless tone, never taking his finger from the words.

"Next!" interrupted Gray-beard. "The same verse; read as though you were wide awake and calling to your playmates, not as if you were going to sleep."

The boy addressed straightened himself up and shouted out:

"Come, come, come, the Summer now is here!" going through the verse without a break, then he glanced proudly toward the girls, only to see them giggling behind their books.

"Silence!" cried Gray-beard, striking his desk. "That was well done!"

The door slowly opened, and the farmer entered, hat in hand, and addressed Gray-beard, "I want to transfer a sow with a litter of pigs from one pen to another, and I've come to ask if you could let me have the help of some of the boys?"

When permission had been granted, a

number of willing hands went up, and as many faces turned with eager expectancy to the farmer, who looked around, and then said, "Brush, Frank, Lester, and Warren will do."

We followed the farmer to the pen, and at once jumped in, each one seizing a little pig; but, before we could turn, the sow made such an onslaught upon us that we dropped the pigs and scrambled over the fence; but Lester, who was last, left a piece of his trousers in the jaws of the angry beast. After this exciting experience, at which the farmer could hardly stop laughing, we held a consultation with him, and agreed upon a plan which we immediately proceeded to carry out.

We threatened the sow with our hats; she retreated into a corner with her young; then Brush slyly went up, and, reaching his hand through the fence, caught one of the little pigs by the legs and held it fast; it squealed lustily, and the infuriated mother made savage attacks upon the fence. Then Lester, Warren, the farmer, and I sprang into the pen, caught the frightened little pigs, and

ran with them to the new pen. Brush released his prisoner, and the cry of the transported little ones brought the mother to the pen, where she was secured.

While the farmer was fastening the gate, we boys walked around the hog-yard; Warren, who was ahead, discovered a weak place in the fence, and beckoned excitedly for us to hasten.

There were times when the pupils became very tired of their books, and longed to take a run over the prairies or through the woods. When this longing came upon them, they sought for ways and means by which to have the school closed, and secure a holiday. I remember once, it was in the fall, the members of the Big Seven loosened the joints of the long stove-pipe during recess. When school opened in the afternoon, and their class was called, they marched to the place of recitation, keeping step and jarring the room so that the sections of the pipe fell rattling to the floor, filling the room with smoke, and covering floor and desks with soot. As it would take some time for the pipe to cool and be put up again, and the

room cleaned, the school was dismissed, giving us a half holiday.

Now, in the weakness of the hog fence, there was a chance for an afternoon out of school, and Warren saw it. He told us his plan, and the rest of us fell in with the scheme. After dinner we took some corn and scattered it outside of the fence at the weak place; then we went to the school-room, where Gray-beard, when he came to ring the bell to summon the scholars, found us hard at work on our arithmetic lessons.

The geography class was up, and Brush was describing the rivers of South America, when the door was thrown open by the superintendent, who exclaimed, "Hurry, boys! The pigs are out and going to the Indians' cornfield!"

We did not wait to be ordered a second time; but, snatching our hats from the pegs in the hall, we ran down the hill with wild shouts and cries. All the afternoon we chased pigs, and had a glorious time, while the girls had to stay in school and be banged at by Gray-beard.

It was almost supper-time when we finally

drove the pigs into the yard and repaired the weak places in the fence. Flushed with our exciting chase we entered the dining-room when the bell rang, and took our places at the table for the evening meal; then the superintendent, looking at us with a kindly smile, thanked us for the good service we had rendered that afternoon!

The few hours' release from the tasks of the school-room had brought about a general good feeling among the boys; so, when we had partaken of the simple fare, we gathered on our play-ground and joined in a number of lively games in the long twilight. So interested and excited had we become in our play that we took no notice of the fading light and the lateness of the hour until the first bell for bed sounded.

Our school was an industrial one, and in the assignment to the larger boys and girls of various duties in and about the building, I was given the care of the hydraulic ram that pumped the water from the spring to the house. In the morning I started it, and in the evening shut it off. The ram was located in a wooded ravine a quarter of a

mile from the school, and I usually stopped it while it was yet light, for, like many a foolish boy, I was afraid to go away from the house alone in the dark. Now in the excitement of play I had forgotten all about the ram until I heard the bell calling us to prepare for bed, nor had I realized till then that it was dark, and that the sky in the west was black with storm clouds through which the lightning zigzagged, and that there was an incessant rumble of thunder. The myriad of fireflies that filled the air with flashes of red light only made the darkness seem yet darker.

Stricken all at once with fear, I called loudly for Brush and the rest of the boys, but none of them responded. I was afraid to go to the ram alone in the dark, but if I should let it pump all night the water would overflow the kitchen, and that would mean a disgraceful punishment for me. I went from boy to boy, trying to secure a companion; but not one of them dared to go with me, they were all afraid of ghosts. Marbles could not tempt them, nor could a much coveted gun-lock, which for the first

time I was willing to part with, induce any boy to go. The time for the last call for bed was fast approaching, and I dared not wait longer trying to secure an escort, so I started on a run, frightened nearly out of my wits at everything I saw, but on I went as if racing for life.

I reached the place and stood over the square pit in which the ram was placed, and was about to go down the ladder into it, when I saw something move rapidly at the bottom. I nearly fell over backwards as I jumped away. I ran toward the house, but the thought of the overflow in the kitchen, and the punishment that was sure to follow, came back to my mind. For a moment I struggled between a known and an unknown fate, and decided to meet the latter. With set teeth and clenched fists I jumped into the pit, backed into the nearest corner, yelled at the top of my voice, while I struck right and left with my fists and kicked out with my feet. Let it be ghost or beast, I was determined to fight it and die game. I kept on striking, kicking, and yelling, but nothing put itself in my way. I dropped to the

ground, panting, but kept an eye on the white thing which had also moved into a corner. I made a feint at charging upon it and it fled to another corner; then I put my head close to the ground to discover the shape of my enemy, when, to my joy, I discerned the outline of a rabbit. With a long-drawn breath of relief I stood upright, turned off the ram, made a rush upon the rabbit and caught it. Hastily rolling it up in my jacket, I climbed the ladder, ran up the hill as though a dozen ghosts were after me, and reached my bed just in time to say "Amen" to the evening prayer.

When Gray-beard had gone down, I whispered to Lester and Edwin, "I've caught a white rabbit!"

"Let's scare the boys," said Lester.

So we dropped the little creature on the floor, and it ran around the room as hard as it could go, while one of us cried out in a loud whisper "Ghost!" Then every boy in the room pulled the bedclothes over his head, and did not dare to uncover again.

We kept the rabbit for a pet, and made a box for it. We liked to watch it eat, and it

did not suffer for want of food so long as we had it. One of the "gangs" among the small boys came to us one day while we were feeding our pet, and offered us some clay marbles for it. We looked upon their offer with contempt, for we all knew how to make clay marbles ourselves, and had all we wanted.

"I'll tell you what we'll do though," said Brush to the would-be purchasers. "If you will give each one of us seventeen cakes, you can take the rabbit."

The boys retired and held a private consultation, then came back, and the leader said, "We'll take the rabbit."

These boys must have coveted the rabbit very much, for there was not a boy in the school who did not love cake, and the one slice of brown ginger-cake we were each given for Sunday noon lunch was the only delicacy we tasted. This cake became a currency among the boys, and all contracts for cakes were faithfully kept. I know of only one instance where a boy failed to keep his bargain, and he was so persecuted by the other scholars that he was

obliged to pay his debt in order to live in peace.

Brush thought he had put the price of the rabbit so high that it would not be accepted; but as we could not back out of our agreement, we were obliged to part with our ghost rabbit for eighty-five cakes.

As the number of the "gang" purchasing the rabbit was the same as ours, for seventeen Sundays these five boys went without their cakes, while each one of us enjoyed a double share.

Chapter IX

William T. Sherman

HE stood on the third board of the fence from the ground, and leaned with his elbows on the top one, now and again kicking with his moccasined foot a loose panel. How long he had been standing there rattling that loose board no one knew, but in time one of the boys noticed him, and suddenly he became an object of the greatest interest among the boys of all sizes at the school. Boys who were playing down by the river, up by the spring, and over by the saw mill came running to see the stranger; and how the word reached them was as much of a mystery as the appearance of the little figure on the fence.

Every one was eager to pelt him with a question, and get as close to him as possible. He answered the questions in monosyllables; but he showed objection to any near approach, by freeing his bare arms from his little buffalo robe and pointing a wooden pop-gun at the eye of the boy who was in-

clined to be too familiar. We kept at him until we found out that his name was Thin'-je-zhin-ga, which, translated into the language of the Missionaries, signified Little Tail.[1]

He had come over from the village to see the school, and was as much interested in us as we were in him. All at once something attracted his attention; his black eyes sparkled, out came one arm from under his robe, and he pointed with a very dirty little finger and said, "Give me one of those!"

The coveted object was a brass button on the jacket of one of the small students. When Little Tail was asked what he wanted to do with it, he said, "Tie it to my scalp-lock." This sounded very funny to us, and we all laughed. The little chap retreated into his robe, covered his head, and looked out at us with one eye.

The bell rang for dinner; and there fol-

[1] He belonged to a band in the Omaha tribe known as Mon'-thin-ka-ga-hae, people of the underground world; in other words, animals that burrowed and lived in the earth; such had small tails, and the name Little Tail referred to this peculiarity.

lowed a general scramble to appear promptly at the table, and no thought was given to the queer little visitor. Being the last boy to enter the house, I turned to look back at him, and there he stood perched upon the fence, staring after us as though he wondered why he was so suddenly deserted.

When we came out from dinner, he was still on the fence, but he was busy. He had an ear of roasted corn and was shelling the kernels; when he had nearly a handful he tipped his head back, poured the grains into his mouth, and ate them with relish. After he had stripped half of the cob, he seemed to be satisfied, and the remainder disappeared in the recesses of his robe. As he finished his corn dinner, one of the school-boys said to him, "Little Tail, how would you like to stay and live with us here?"

"I would like it," he promptly replied.

"Will you stay?"

"Yes."

It was soon reported to the superintendent that a new pupil had come. When the afternoon session opened and the pupils were seated, Little Tail was given a seat at

one of the desks, but to our delight he slid down and sat on the floor. The teacher rapped the top of his desk with a ruler and cried, "Silence!" and order was restored.

"What is the name of the new boy?" he asked.

"Thin'-je-zhin-ga," answered one of the boys.

Gray-beard tried to repeat the name, but only set the whole school laughing. While this was going on, Little Tail reached down to his belt and drew out a roll of milkweed fibre. It was his ammunition. He tore off enough to make a bullet, chewed it, and, bringing the breach of the pop-gun to his mouth, inserted the ball, twisting the gun with his hands while he pressed the wad in with his teeth, making many motions with his head. By pounding the butt of the rammer on the floor, he drove the ball to the firing point; then raising the gun he began forcing the ball with vigorous thrusts, aiming it at a mischievous boy who sat opposite making faces at him. Bang! went the weapon; the bullet, instead of hitting the object aimed at, struck Gray-beard in the face,

and made him throw his head back. We covered our faces to suppress the giggles that bubbled up at this mishap. The wounded man looked sharply at the young artillerist, who, seeing the mischief he had done, very slyly thrust his gun into his robe, and, keeping an eye on his victim, sat perfectly still.

The teacher looked serious, then we became scared. After a moment his face relaxed, and he said in a pleasant tone, "We must have the name of the new boy on the Register, but we cannot have any name that is unpronounceable. We shall have to give him an English name. Will you suggest one?"

A number of hands went up and as many historic names were offered and rejected. Finally it was determined to call him William T. Sherman and that name was entered upon the Register.

After school a few boys were detailed to wash and dress the new arrival; so, with arms full of clothing, towels, and other bathing appliances, the lad was taken up to the boys' dormitory. The first thing to

be done was to cut his long hair. A towel was put around his neck, and soon the shears were singing a tune about his ears. He seemed to enjoy it, and laughed at the jokes made by the boys; but when by some chance he caught sight of his scalp-lock lying on the floor like a little black snake, he put his fists into his eyes and fell to sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Pshaw!" said little Isaac, rubbing his closely cropped head, "mine was longer than yours when it was cut off, but I did n't cry!"

"Mine too!" exclaimed Abraham, picking up the braided lock and putting it where his had been; at which the rest of the boys laughed.

When the bath was over, William T. Sherman was dressed. He was delighted with his brand-new clothes, particularly with the long row of brass buttons that adorned the front of the jacket. When it came to the shoes, his grief for the lost scalp-lock was clean forgotten, and he strutted about to show the boys that his shining black shoes sang to his satisfaction.

William T. Sherman was quick to learn, and by the time winter was over he was speaking the peculiar English used by the boys of the school; he said, "fool bird," for quail; "first time," for long ago, and other Indian expressions turned into English. He was fond of arithmetic, and spent much time ciphering on his slate; he would write down the figure 1, 2, or 3, add to it a string of aughts, and then try to read them off. Grammar he abhorred, and in the spelling class, he held a permanent place at the foot. In out door sports he excelled; he could beat any boy of his size in leaping and running, and we had yet to learn other things in which he was expert.

One day, during the great June rise, all the boys were at the river watching the huge drift logs floating down the muddy Missouri.

"Say, boys!" exclaimed Ulysses S. Grant, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets; "I bet one hundred dollars that river is strong. I would n't like to swim in it; I 'm sure the eddies would pull me under."

Gideon, who was always boasting of what

his father could do, shouted, "My father could swim clear acrost and back again; he ain't 'fraid of eddies. He —"

"What's that?" cried a number of boys, startled by a heavy splash in the water. We all watched, and two brown feet came to the surface, wiggled, and disappeared. After a moment a round black head slowly arose. "Ha! Ha! I'm not 'fraid eddy!" shouted William T. Sherman, for it was he. A few vigorous strokes brought him to shore again.

"Take off your shirts and pants, boys, let's swim," he said.

We did so, and timidly splashed about the shallow edges of the water. A large tree was drifting down near the middle of the river. William ran up along the bank for quite a distance, and then plunged into the water. It was a beautiful sight to watch him as he threw his arms up and down, moving swiftly toward the tree; he reached it, dived under it, and came up on the other side; then he scrambled on the trunk and shouted for us to come, but none of us dared to go. After a moment he stood up on the

tree, flourished an imaginary whip, and cried, "Git up, there!" with a succession of swear words, — genuine swear words. He was imitating the Agency teamster, and did not know what he was saying. He had heard the servant of the Government urge on his horses by such terms, and he was merely repeating them. Those of us who had been at the Mission a long time, and had all the Shorter Catechism in our little heads, and were orthodox by compulsion, if not by conviction, were horrified to hear those dreadful words uttered by a pupil of our school; for we knew some severe punishment awaited the little sinner should there be a traitor among us to make it known to Gray-beard.

Before we had fairly recovered from our shock at hearing this swearing, we were startled by a cry, "Job is drowning!" Not one of us moved, we were so frightened; but, quick as a flash, William T. Sherman sprang from his imaginary wagon, swam swiftly to the boy, caught him by the hair as he was going down for the last time, and brought him to the surface. "Kick! Kick!" he shouted; "make your arms go! Don't

stop!" And after a hard struggle the two boys landed.

Job had swallowed considerable water, and become very sick. We didn't know what to do for him; but after we had rubbed and pommelled him, and held him by the heels head downward, he felt better; then we took him to the Mission and put him to bed.

On our way back Sherman spoke very little, but those of us who had been frightened into helplessness had much to say as to what we did or might have done to save Job.

At supper Gray-beard as usual counted the boys, and found one missing, "Where 's Job?" he asked.

"He 's got the th'tomick ache," said Daniel, his mouth full and his spoon raised half way with a new supply.

School went on the next morning as though nothing had happened. The teachers had not heard of the drowning and the rescue; but the girls had learned all about it and threw admiring glances at Sherman: to them he had become a hero, and each of the different gangs among the boys now wanted this hero as a member.

The recitations for the afternoon session were over, and the bell was tapped as a signal to put away our books and slates, and struck again to call us to order. When all arms were folded, there followed an ominous silence. Gray-beard slowly looked around the school-room, as though to read every face turned up to him, then he spoke:

"I have been told that some of the boys in this school are in the habit of swearing; that is one of the things you are forbidden to do. It is wicked to swear, and any boy that I find has been doing so I shall punish very severely. I want you to remember this. After the closing exercises William T. Sherman will come to my room; I have something to say to him."

All eyes on the boys' side turned toward William as we chanted the Lord's prayer; then Gray-beard made his usual supplication, during which the big girls twisted their necks to look at their hero.

The exit from the school-room was quite orderly, but as soon as the groups of boys passed into the hall, they set up a shouting and singing, and made off to their different

resorts for play. We, the Middle Five, were the last to go; and, as had been hastily arranged between us, I went to Gray-beard and asked some trivial question in order to give time for Brush to go and advise Sherman as to what answers to make if he was asked as to his being guilty of swearing.

"When he asks you if you been swearing, say, 'No, sir, I don't know what swear is,'" said Brush to Sherman.

"All right."

"Then tell him you been saying what you heard Agency man say to horses; but you don't know what those words mean, maybe they 're swear words, you don't know."

Gray-beard went up to his room, followed by William T. Sherman, who for the first time entered that apartment. Boys who committed serious offences were disciplined in that place. I was taken there for fighting Andrew Johnson; Brush took his punishment there when he nearly cut Jonathan's ear off with a wooden sword. Most of us had had peculiar experiences in that room.

William T. Sherman had come to us direct from a tent; our bare school-room

and play-room were all that he had seen of the furnishings of a civilized dwelling, so when he was suddenly ushered into Gray-beard's room he was quite dazzled by the bright draperies, pictures, and the polished furniture. He stood with hands in his pockets, mouth and eyes wide-open staring at the things, although twice requested by his host to sit down.

William timidly took the chair assigned him. It rocked backwards, and up went his feet; he clutched wildly at the arms, and the chair rocked forward; he got his footing, then sat perfectly still, fearing the chair would fall over with him.

Gray-beard took a seat facing the boy, and began to question him, "I was told that you had been swearing; is it true?"

Bewilderment at new sights, and the fright of the rocking-chair had put Brush's promptings out of Sherman's head, and in his confusion he answered, "Yes, sir — ma 'am."

"It is wicked to swear, and you must be taught to know that it is. Now say what I say," and Gray-beard repeated the third

commandment, until Sherman could say it without assistance, and then bade him to keep on until told to stop.

Poor William sat in the treacherous rocking-chair repeating this commandment, while Gray-beard wrote at his desk. William might as well have sat there imitating the cry of some animal or bird, for his mind was not dwelling upon the words he was uttering, but following his eyes as they moved from one strange object to another, — the pictures, the gilt frames, the sea shells, the clock on the mantelpiece, then something hanging near the window absorbed his attention, and his tongue and lips ceased to move as he drew with his finger on his knee the figure 1, adding to it a number of aughts. Gray-beard noted the pause, and said, "Go on, William, don't stop." After some little prompting, the boy resumed, but his finger kept moving, making the figure 1 and a string of aughts after it.

When Gray-beard and William T. Sherman left the school-room, Brush and I and the rest of the Five went toward the spring and sat under the large elm. Brush lay

down on the grass and read a book he had borrowed from the superintendent, while the rest of us talked.

"I'd like to see that boy who told on William T. Sherman; I'd give him a licking," said Warren.

"I'd kick him hard," added Edwin.

"I bet it's that tell-tale Edson; he ought to be thumped!" I suggested.

While we were talking, William came and sat down with us. Every now and then a quivering sigh would escape him, although he tried not to show that he had been crying. Little Bob, believing as we did that William had been whipped, and, desiring to express sympathy, said, "Say, did it hurt?" William did not answer; nobody ever answered Bob.

"What did Gray-beard do to you?" I asked, turning to William.

"He made me sit down and say a commandment one hundred times."

"Which one was it? Say it to us."

"I don't want to say it; I said it enough." After a pause he asked, "What is swear?"

"When you call God names, that's swear," said Warren.

"I don't do that. I know God, it's the same Omahas call Wa-kon-da; but I don't know what means lord."

"It's a man just like big chief," explained Lester; "he has plenty of horses and lots of money. When he tells anybody to do anything, he got to do it; that's a lord."

"Is Gray-beard lord?"

"No, Gray-beard is n't lord."

"Say, boys, a one and six aughts is one million, ain't it?"

"Yes," we answered in chorus.

"Gray-beard is lord. He's got one million dollars. I saw it on a book hanging by his window; it had a name, I can't say it, then Bank and Cap'tal, and then a one and six aughts, — that's a million. He's got one million dollars!"

Brush threw his book down, raised himself on his elbow and looked at us with a smile; then he said, "I know that book William T. Sherman saw, it's the book Gray-beard counts the days by, and it's got on it what they call advertisement.

That bank wants people to know it has one million dollars capital to go by; I learned that in my arithmetic. Gray-beard is n't a lord; he 's a missionary, — the same kind that goes to Africa and Greenland's icy mountains."

Chapter X

A Runaway

VACATION had come, and the Indians were about to start on their annual summer buffalo hunt. Some of the scholars were to accompany their parents, and others, after a brief home visit, were to return to the school and continue their studies while the tribe was away.

In the three villages there was great hurry and bustle in every family. Pack saddles were brought out of the caches where they had lain through the winter. The task of mending them fell to the older people of the household, while the younger folk busied themselves in retrimming their more ornate trappings. Goods not necessary for the journey were stored away, and the dwellings were made ready for the long absence.

At last there remained but one day before the time set for the departure of the tribe. In the afternoon I bade my parents good-by, and reluctantly returned to the school.

Quite a number of the boys and girls had already come back, among them Lester and Warren. Brush had not left the school, so on my arrival I received from the three boys the usual greetings we accorded each other when one returned after an absence. We four paced the long front porch, arm in arm, for a while, and then went and sat down in the shade of a tree.

"Where is Edwin?" asked Brush; "is n't he coming back?"

"No," I replied; "his mother wanted him to; but his father did n't want to leave him behind, so he 's going on the hunt."

"He 'll have lots of fun," said Warren; "I wish I could go!"

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, Brush borrowed the superintendent's spy-glass, and we went to a high point whence we could watch the movements of the people in the village nearest the school. We took turns in looking through the glass. Already the head of the great caravan had gone behind the first hill, but my family had not yet started. We looked toward Edwin's house, and saw that the

people were just moving. It was a wonderful sight to us, the long procession on the winding trail, like a great serpent of varied and brilliant colors. At last I saw my father mount a horse and move forward, the rest of the family followed him, and I watched them until they finally disappeared beyond the green hills. It was nearly noon when the end of the line went out of sight.

While the movements were going on in the village, we could hear the neighing of horses, the barking of dogs, and the hum of voices, but now there was a stillness in the deserted village which brought upon us a sense of loneliness that was hard to overcome. We slowly returned to the Mission and ate our noonday meal without speaking. There seemed to be a general depression among the remaining pupils at the school. A silence pervaded all the surroundings which made each boy wish to retire from the other and to be alone.

At breakfast, the next morning, there was the same sense of stillness; even the superintendent and the teachers at their table

seemed to be homesick, and they passed the dishes to each other in silence. The reading of the Scriptures and the prayer of the superintendent was in a tone that added to the gloominess which had taken possession of our simple little souls.

As we were slowly marching out of the dining-room, when the worship was over, the superintendent stopped Brush and said to him:

"I want you to go after the mail this morning; go on horse-back so as to get back soon. I have some work for you to do this afternoon. Take Dolly, and use the large saddle; the other one needs mending."

"Let 's go down to the spring," said Lester to Warren and me.

So while Brush went to the barn to saddle up, we three went to the spring and sat under an elm that stood near by.

"Say, boys, I 'm going to the hunt!" said Lester, startling us with the sudden announcement; "I heard that two families down at the Wood-eaters' village can't get away for two days yet, and I 'm going down there so I can go with them. The Omahas

always wait on the Wa-tae (Elkhorn River), for those that are last."

"If you're going, I'm going too," spoke up Warren; "I don't want to stay here."

"If you two go, I'm going!" I exclaimed.

"All right, let's all go then," said Lester, rising. "We must hurry up; some one might see us!"

We followed a narrow path that led through a ravine just beyond the spring. We were in the greatest excitement; every little sound aroused within us the fear of detection, and we frequently sought for a hiding place, while we carefully avoided all well-beaten paths. Silently we plodded our way through the bushes until we came to a hill where there were no trees, then we ran as fast as our legs could carry us for another wooded place.

We stopped a moment when passing to take a look at the village. Silence prevailed. Not a living thing was astir. Three whirlwinds chased each other along the winding paths between the houses, making funnel-shaped dust clouds as they sped on.

"The ghosts have entered the village,"

said Lester, in our own language, and in a melancholy tone; "they always do that as soon as the living leave their houses!"

Entering the ravine for which we were making, we continued our journey. The nettle weeds caused us much suffering, for we were barefooted, and wore short trousers. We came to an opening; before us lay the road to the Agency; we looked cautiously around, then started to cross it to go into another ravine that headed toward the big village, when the snorting of a horse was heard with startling distinctness.

"Quick! quick! get down!" exclaimed Lester in a loud whisper, as he dropped into the gully of the old abandoned wagon-road.

Warren and I followed hastily, pulling the tall grass over us. We heard the footsteps of the horse come nearer and nearer to our hiding place. It stopped and reached its head down, and began to nibble the grass under which I lay concealed. I looked up through a slight opening, and, behold! there on the horse sat Brush with one leg thrown over the pommel of the saddle, busily reading a book. I could see the boy's eyes and

his lips moving as he read, and at times it seemed as though his eyes were looking right into mine. I was in great suspense while the horse stood there, but at length Brush picked up the reins and urged Dolly on. As soon as he disappeared at the bend of the road, we rose and darted across and ran down to the ravine.

We entered the big village of sod houses through which we had to pass. Here, too, we felt the sense of desolation that pervaded even the hills around. Somewhere from the midst of these peculiar dwellings came the doleful howl of a stray dog, the only sound that broke the stillness of the place. What sensations my companions experienced upon hearing the melancholy wail of that deserted beast I do not know; but, like the rapid advance of a fire over the prairie, a thrill that made the very roots of my hair creep vibrated through my body. Involuntarily we paused to listen; the long-drawn moan came to a close, and the ghostly echoes carried on the sound as though to mock the lost creature.

"Let's run!" exclaimed Lester, in a

frightened tone; "let's get away from here!"

And so we sped on until, all out of breath, we were far beyond the limits of the village.

The shadows of the hills and the trees were beginning to grow long as we reached the foot of the bluffs where lay the village of the Wood-eaters. We followed a narrow but well-beaten path, wending our way among the tall trees. Suddenly a dog, with tail rigid and erect, and hair bristling, came barking at us with savage fury.

"'Shta-du-ba! 'Shta-du-ba!" called Lester, as he came near. "It is I, don't you know me?"

The dog, on hearing his name from a familiar voice, relaxed his aggressive appearance and assumed one of joyous welcome. He jumped upon us, licked our hands, wagged his whole body as well as his tail, and preceded us with leaps and barks of delight.

We came to a clear space, and there before us against the deep shadows of the woods stood a solitary sod house, the smoke lazily ascending to the sky from the top of the dome-shaped roof, making a picture of simple

contentment. In the projecting doorway stood a man looking intently in our direction. The serious expression of his face changed to one of pleasure and amusement as he descried the three school-boys. When we were near enough for him to fully recognize us, his smile burst into a mirthful laugh in which we could not help joining, though to us our business was full of seriousness.

"Woo-hoo!" he mildly exclaimed, "what important thing is it that has brought you here at this time, when all are about going away? Your mother left yesterday," he said, addressing my companions, then turning to me remarked, "Your father must have gone to-day."

"We ran away from school because we want to go on the hunt," explained Lester. "I know my mother has gone; but my uncle has not left yet, so we are going to him."

"He is still here, we all go to-morrow morning early; but you should have stayed at the House of Teaching; you would get more good there than by going on the hunt. You know the way to Me-chah'-pe's house, just follow that path."

We trudged along to Me-chah'-pe's house. The family had gathered about an outside fire, and were eating their supper in the dusk. Upon our coming into the light of the fire we were recognized; the mother and grown daughter greeted us with exclamations of surprise and sympathy; while the father and the two sons glanced at each other with expressions of amusement. A place was assigned us in the circle, and soon we were busily engaged with the simple fare placed before us by the good and hospitable mother.

"Why do parents when they go away leave their children at the House of Teaching, I wonder?" commented the woman, as she apportioned the food for us. "Some people show no signs of affection for their sons and daughters until they sicken and die; then they tear their hair and rend the air with their loud wails. It is well enough while the parents are at home that they should place the young ones in the care of the White-chests; but, when going on a long journey like this, they should take the children with them."

By the side of every Indian house stands a raised platform made of poles, elevated upon posts, some seven or eight feet high, planted firmly in the ground. This platform is used for drying corn and squash, at the time of harvesting; but, through the summer when the people are at home, the young men and boys take possession of it, for sleeping in the open air. As weariness began to be felt, one by one, the family arose, and, without formality, each sought his place of rest. We school-boys and the sons of Mechah'-pe repaired to the platform, climbing the "stairs" made of a single log, with notches cut in it for steps.

This was the first night I had ever spent out of doors. The novel experience, and the excitements of the day, filled my mind with strange speculations, and I lay awake long after my companions had gone to sleep. Now and then, I heard the chatter of birds and the whirring of their wings, as they flew by far above me, and I wondered if they could see in the darkness. The roar of the river filled the still air, and the crash of a tree uprooted by the current sent its echoes

far and wide; then the sounds about me grew to faint murmurings, until I was conscious of them no more.

When I awoke, the dawn was coming, and the stars were beginning to turn pale. There was a gentle stir in the tent near by; a tall man came out, and his shadowy form passed from view into the slowly rising mist. A woman moved noiselessly to the fire-place, and, bending over, began to gather the embers together, blowing them to life with her breath. The gray streak along the horizon slowly turned to a rosy hue; here and there the birds began drowsily to peep and twitter, then, when the sun shot its rays through the heavens, a thousand voices burst into rapturous song.

My companions awoke, and one by one we climbed down the rude ladder to the ground.

When we gathered for breakfast, the mother, as she helped the food, asked, "Where is Na-zhe'-de-ah?" (Lester.)

Warren and I looked at each other; neither of us could explain his absence.

"Call him," said the good woman, address-

ing her son; "we must hurry, the sun is up!"

No response came to the young man's call. It was evident that Lester had slipped away before any one was awake.

Breakfast over, Me-chah'-pe and his sons saddled and packed the horses, while the wife and daughter gathered the various utensils. Warren and I tried to make ourselves useful by holding up the packs with our shoulders, as they were being placed on the horses.

Me-chah'-pe looked at Warren, then at me, as he shouldered his rifle, and said, "I am sorry that I have not enough horses for all of us to ride. You see those I have are heavily burdened; so we will have to do as our fathers did, take one step forward, then another, and keeping stepping forward until we get to the place where we are going. Are we ready? Here we go!"

And we did go, — horses, dogs, and all. Soon we were joined by the man of the lonely sod house and his family, and together we made quite a cavalcade as we went up hill and down hill, and up hill and down hill again. By and by, we reached a long

ridge, called by the Indians "the tortuous ridge," which zigzagged in a westerly direction, and along it lay the hunting trail.

The sun grew hot; Warren and I were drenched with perspiration as we plodded on. Every now and then Me-chah'-pe gave us an encouraging word, when we showed signs of lagging. We were determined to keep on, for were we not going to a buffalo hunt! The heat increased. The dogs did not now chase each other and run after birds as when we started out, but let loose their tongues and panted, keeping close to the shadows of the horses. On we all trudged, while the one baby slept on its mother's back, its little head rocking from side to side with the motion of her steps.

As we reached an elevated point on the ridge, Me-chah'-pe shaded his face with his hand and scanned the horizon. Far ahead of us his experienced eye caught sight of an object, like a mere speck. He pointed it out to us, saying, "There's somebody coming."

Warren and I looked at each other in alarm, and then kept our eyes on the speck,

which grew larger and larger as the distance between it and us lessened.

"The horse looks like one of your father's," said Me-chah'-pe to me. "I think it is some one looking for you!"

My heart sank when I recognized the horse as father's, and the rider as my uncle, and, for the first time in my life, I was not glad to meet him.

Warren and I were captured, and there was no escape. We tried to be brave when Me-chah'-pe shook hands with us, as his party moved westward; but we were far from happy when, ignominiously mounted on father's horse, one behind the other, we followed my uncle, who walked so rapidly that the animal had to trot now and then to keep up. The road over which we had so laboriously travelled on our outward way was soon retraced, and the sun still high when my uncle, who had wandered all night in search of us, turned us over to Gray-beard.

It was thought best to punish us; so Warren was taken to the top of the house and locked up in the attic, where he was to

reflect upon the wrong he had committed in running away. But I am quite sure he thought more about the devil and the ghosts in that horrid place than of anything else.

As for me, I was marched to the dining-room, placed with my back to one of the posts, and my arms brought around it and tied; then I was left alone in this uncomfortable position, — to repent.

The afternoon was close and hot; the windows and doors were open, but the place was very quiet. Now and then I heard the cry of a bird, or the laughter of the happy wren. The time seemed very long as I stood there, with my arms thrown back around the post and my hands tied so that I could not defend myself against the flies that attacked my bare feet. A rooster came to the back door and entered the dining-room. He shied on discovering me; but, as I did not move, he began picking in the cracks of the floor. He spied my toe, looked at it curiously, turning his head from side to side, then stretched his neck and gave it a dab. I was in no mood to be amused by his actions, so I sent him flopping and squawk-

ing under the table. Recovering from his surprise, he ran around, sprang on the table, then on the sill of the open window, tossed up his head, flapped his wings, gave a lusty crow, and hopped out.

Immediately I saw eight little fingers hook themselves on the outer edge of the window-sill, and a head with black hair held back by a rubber comb rise higher and higher until two bright eyes gazed right into mine. The head disappeared, and shortly after a little figure cautiously approached the door, looked all around, and then came up to me. It was Rosalie. Her bright smiling face threw a sunbeam into my gloomy little heart. Without saying a word she wiped the perspiration from my face with the corner of her apron; then she went away softly in the direction of the kitchen. Soon she returned with a tin cup having in it bits of ice. She took a lump and put it in my mouth, then stood looking in my face. After a while, she said, "I like you, don't I?"

"'M h'm!" I assented with my mouth closed, nodding my head.

When we get big, we 're going to be married, ain't we ?"

"'M h'm !" again I answered.

"We won't send our children to this horrid old place, will we ?"

"'M 'm ! 'M 'm !" I replied with emphasis, shaking my head and stamping the floor.

The little sweet-heart, seeing that the flies troubled my ankles, went out and came back with a linden branch and brushed away the pests. I slid to the floor and sat down with my legs stretched out. Rosalie dropped down too, and sat whisking away the flies.

Gradually things took on queer shapes, and the sounds seemed to come from afar; there was a moment of confusion and then, — I found myself on a wide prairie. Heavy clouds were swiftly approaching; the thunder rolled long and loud, and the lightning darted hither and thither. Off in the distance I saw a forest. I pushed toward it with all my strength so as to take shelter before the storm should come upon me; but as I labored on there crept over me a consciousness of a weight upon my back which, hitherto, I had not noticed. It retarded my

progress, and from time to time I was obliged to stop and give a little spring to shift the burden higher up. A cry of terror came from the thing I was carrying; then I knew it was little Rosalie. I tried to speak words of encouragement to her, but my strength was fast failing. Great drops of rain fell, and the wind drove the dust into my face, blinding me. I tottered on with my load, but the timber was still far away. A vivid flash, a deafening crash, and I fell to the ground with a cry. I tried to rise, but my legs and arms were as though dead.

With a start I opened my eyes. The room was darkened; there was a great commotion; all through the house, windows were being rapidly closed and the doors swung to with a bang. A terrific storm had arisen, and the building was in danger of destruction. Rosalie lay asleep with her head resting on my knees.

Chapter XI

A New Study

IT was a hot September afternoon; our gingham handkerchiefs, which matched our shirts, were wet with mopping our faces. We all felt cross; Gray-beard was cross, and everything we did went wrong.

Warren, who had been sent to the spring for a pail of cold water, leaned over his desk to Brush, and whispered loud enough for the boys around us to hear, "A big black carriage came up to the gate just now, and the Agent and three other big fat men got out. The super'tendent shook hands with them, and they went to his room."

While Gray-beard was shaking a boy to make him read correctly, the news of the black carriage and the fat men went from boy to boy. The girls were dying to know what word it was the boys were passing around; but the aisle that separated them from us was too wide to whisper across. Warren's girl made signs to him which he

at first did not understand; when he caught her meaning, he tore a fly-leaf out of his book, wrote on it, rolled it into a ball and threw it to the girl, who deftly caught it; these two were adepts at such transmission of messages. The girl unfolded the paper, read it, and passed it on; then the girls felt better and resumed their work.

The class in mental arithmetic took the floor. Not one of the boys knew his lesson. As the recitation went on Gray-beard's face darkened and his forehead wrinkled; he came to a timid youngster with a hard question. I knew there was going to be trouble for the little chap; so, to save him pain and distress, I thought of a plan by which to distract Gray-beard's attention. I reached under my desk and took hold of a thread which I carefully drew until my thumb and finger touched the stiff paper to which it was attached, then, as the boy stammered out the wrong answer and Gray-beard made an impatient movement toward him, I gave the thread a gentle pull, "Biz-z-z-z-z!" it went.

"Who 's making that noise?" asked Gray-

beard, turning toward our end of the schoolroom.

I loosened the pressure, and the noise ceased. When Gray-beard returned to the boy, I again pulled the thread, "Biz-z-z-z-z!" Something was wrong this time; the buzzing did not cease, it became louder and angrier.

"Who 's doing that?" exclaimed Gray-beard.

Every boy and girl looked up to him as though to say, "I did not do it." The buzzing went on; I alone kept my eyes on my book, and so aroused suspicion. I did not dare to put my hand under the desk again to stop the buzzing, for I had lost the thread. Gray-beard came towards me and asked, "What have you there?" I did not answer.

"Stand up and let me see!" he exclaimed. Before I could give him any warning, he put his hand in the desk and felt about; he sprang back with a cry, "Ah! I 'm bitten! Is it a snake?"

"No, it is n't," I answered; and, peering carefully into the desk, I drew out the buzzing thing and showed it to him; it was only

a wasp fastened by its slender waist to a sheet of paper.

Although he felt relieved of his fright, the pain of the sting was arousing his anger, and I saw that there was trouble coming to me; but at that moment, the door opened and in walked the superintendent and the four fat men. Gray-beard went forward and was introduced to them. There was a scramble by three of the large boys to get chairs from the dining-room for the visitors. When the gentlemen had made a quiet survey of our faces, they sat down and questioned Gray-beard about the branches taught at the school, and the progress made by the pupils. In the meantime I had released my prisoner; it went buzzing around the room, and then manœuvred over the bald head of one of the visitors, who beat the air with his hands to ward it off.

"Frank, catch that wasp," said Gray-beard.

I caught the troublesome creature in my hat and turned it out of doors.

When the questioning of the visitors was over, Gray-beard turned to us and said,

"Now, children, pay strict attention; these gentlemen want to see what you have learned. I will put some questions to you."

We became so silent that we could hear a pin drop. The visitors smiled upon us pleasantly, as though to encourage us.

"Who discovered America?" asked Gray-beard. Dozens of hands went up. "Abraham, you may answer."

An expression of amusement spread over the faces of the scholars as the great awkward boy stood up. Gray-beard must have been bewildered by the sting of the wasp and the sudden appearance of visitors, else he would not have made such a blunder; for he knew very well what every boy and girl of the school could do; however there was no help for it now; Abraham Lincoln, standing with his hands in his pockets, had the floor; he put his weight on one foot and then on the other, the very picture of embarrassment; he cleared his throat, looked helplessly at me, and then at Brush, — "Come," said Gray-beard, "we are waiting."

"George Washington!" answered Abraham.

A titter ran around among the pupils. Gray-beard's face turned red, then white, as he said, "Abraham, take your seat. Brush, can you tell us who discovered America?"

"Columbus," promptly answered the boy. Then a series of questions were asked, which the children answered voluntarily, and did credit to their teacher. The visitors nodded approvingly to each other. When the examination was over, the Agent arose and, addressing the school, said:

"You have acquitted yourselves well in this sudden and unexpected test; I will now ask you to spell for me. Here is a book," said he, turning the leaves of a pretty gilt edged volume, "which I will give to the scholar who can spell best."

Taking a spelling book, he gave out the words himself. We all stood up, and those who misspelled a word sat down. One by one the pupils dropped to their seats, until only Brush, a big girl, and I remained on the floor; finally I went down, and the girl and Brush went on; they were now in the midst of the hard words. At last Brush failed; the girl also misspelled the word;

but as the prize book could not be divided, it was given to her.

"Are the children taught music?" asked one of the strangers.

"No," replied the superintendent; "but they can sing nearly all of the Sunday-school hymns."

"They should be taught music as well as reading and spelling," remarked one of the gentlemen, then, addressing the children, he asked:

"Have your people music, and do they sing?"

"They do," answered one of the large boys.

"I wish you would sing an Indian song for me," continued the man. "I never heard one."

There was some hesitancy, but suddenly a loud clear voice close to me broke into a Victory song; before a bar was sung another voice took up the song from the beginning, as is the custom among the Indians, then the whole school fell in, and we made the room ring. We understood the song, and knew the emotion of which it was the ex-

pression. We felt, as we sang, the patriotic thrill of a victorious people who had vanquished their enemies; but the men shook their heads, and one of them said, "That 's savage, that 's savage! They must be taught music."

So it came about that every afternoon after this visit we spent an hour on a singing lesson. We learned quite a number of songs, but we sang them by ear, as it was difficult for us to understand the written music. We liked some of the songs we learned very much, and enjoyed singing them almost as well as our own native melodies. Although there were boys with richer voices, Brush was fond of hearing me sing a certain song we had been taught; we always had to give it when visitors came to the Mission. I can remember only the chorus:

"Laura, Laura, still we love thee,
Though we see thy form no more,
And we know thou 'lt come to meet us,
When we reach that mystic shore."

One day the teacher said that we must learn to sing in parts; hitherto we had been

singing in unison as the Indians do; so he assigned the different parts to those scholars whom he thought could carry them. He met with no difficulty in selecting the soprano, contralto, and the tenor; but he could not find any boy who was willing to try the bass. He had given me the tenor, but as he could not find a bass, he said I must take that part as I was less timid about singing. I protested, but there was no escape for me. We learned fairly well to sing in parts a few pieces, but one day the teacher gave us a new song in which, at certain places in the chorus, the bass was unsupported. Our first attempt to render this song resulted in a failure, on account of my embarrassment. The teacher threatened and coaxed before I consented to make another trial. We sang very well together until we came to the chorus; when the leader indicated to me to remain silent, while the others drawled out the first two bars and came to a rest; then he motioned quickly to me, and I croaked, "Daisy Lee!" very much like a bull-frog. A smile rippled over the school, but the leader went on

waving his arms and nodding to the others, who again drawled out, "My dar-ling Dai-sy Lee-e-e-e." This time I knew when to come in; so as soon as they reached the rest, from the very depths of my chest I again croaked, "Daisy Lee!" This time the whole school went into convulsions; the teacher himself could not control his laughter; it was fun for everybody but me. For weeks afterwards whenever the boys saw me, they would mischievously shout in a bass voice, "Daisy Lee!"

This was not my only singing experience at the school. One afternoon the superintendent, Gray-beard, and all the rest of the men at the Mission were called away on some urgent business, and were not expected to be home for supper. At the table one of the ladies presided and asked the blessing over the evening meal. It being warm, the windows were thrown wide open while we ate. When supper was over, the children shifted their positions and waited as usual for the announcement of the hymn. The lady made the selection, but there was no one to lead; a hasty consultation was held

at the first table, then she came over to me with her hymn-book, "Frank, you must lead the singing," she said; "none of us can do it."

I could not understand why I should be selected to lead the singing; but I took the book and looked over the hymn that was chosen. I knew it by heart, and could sing it; but I was embarrassed by the prominent position given me; however, my pride would not permit me to make an excuse, so I struck an attitude, and thinking it the proper thing to do, I imitated the music teacher as well as I could, and searched for the pitch by making a sound like the whinnying of a horse. I was half-conscious that I had provoked some amusement at the teachers' table by this performance, but I boldly struck out, in a clear, loud voice. All joined in, and with an effort sang the first line. The second line began with two or three very high notes, difficult to reach even when the tune was sung at the proper pitch; I struck at them bravely, and just managed to reach them, only one voice, that of a girl, was with me; no one else had ventured.

We two went on and finished the line; at the beginning of the next we were joined by a third voice; but it sang a very different tune. I turned to see who it was, and there, with his paws on the window-sill, was Edwin's dog howling with all his might!

Chapter XII

Ponka Boys

"WOO-HOO! Noo'-zhin-ga pa'-hon ba ma kae don'-ba i ga!" (Oh! boys, get up and look at the snow!) exclaimed a new student, ignorant of the rule against speaking Indian.

We scrambled out of bed and rushed to the windows. Sure enough, there was snow on the ground, and the trees that the frost had stripped of their verdant beauty now stood resplendent in a mantle of white.

Summer had gone. The myriads of little creatures that only a short time ago enlivened the hills and valleys had withdrawn into the recesses of the earth, or other places of safety, each according to its own peculiar habit.

Winter had come. And the school-boy, defying its chilling blasts, dances about in the crisp snow, or on the ice, shouting to his playmates. Delighting in the exercise of every muscle, he races to the hill-top, blows his hot breath on his tingling finger-tips,

mounts his little sled, then dashes down the hill with merry shouts of laughter, though the snow whirls and flies about his ears and beaming face. Again and again he takes this wild descent until he hears the calling of the school-bell; then, with reluctant feet, he enters the class-room, to study the divisions of the earth either by natural boundaries, or by the artificial ones made by aggressive man, to learn about weights and measures, or to memorize the great events that have changed the conditions of nations and of peoples.

Every one was up and dressed that morning when Gray-beard came to the dormitory; and, after repeating our prayer, we hurried down the two flights of stairs, making a noise like thunder. We ran into the yard, where we wrestled for a while, then rubbed our faces and hands with snow.

One of the teachers asked why the boys did so. "All boys do that," answered Brush. "The old folks tell them to do it, because then their faces and hands won't get frozen."

When breakfast was over that morning, and the students had shifted their positions

so as to face the centre of the dining-room, and had folded their arms, the superintendent, marking with his forefinger the chapter he had selected to read at the morning worship, looked up and spoke, "We want the boys to learn the use of tools, and to make things for themselves, so we have provided the boards out of which every boy in this school can make a sled for himself. The carpenter will give to any boy who asks, the materials and show him how to use the tools to make his sled. Of course this must be done before the school hour."

We looked at each other and smiled. The reading of the Scripture and the prayer seemed to us to be unusually long, but at last they came to an end. Then every boy hurried and scurried to the carpenter's shop. Soon dozens of hammers were going crack, crack, and the saws zip, zip.

"Be careful, boys! Look out for nails, or you will ruin your saws," said the carpenter, and he smiled good-naturedly as he went on marking the boards for the next applicant.

Suddenly, in the midst of all the din

some one exclaimed, "Hong!" which is Indian for Ouch! and a big boy danced about, shaking his hand violently in the air, then he brought it down and pressed it between his knees, twisting his body into all sorts of shapes, howling the while. The hammering and sawing ceased, and a dozen voices asked, "What's the matter?" Peter, who was always clumsy in his movements, instead of hitting the nail he was driving, had struck his thumb and smashed it. The traditional "Indian stoicism" was not in him, so he kept up his howling until the carpenter had put on a tobacco poultice and bandaged the injured thumb.

After a lively coasting on our new sleds one afternoon, we were gathered in the school-room, and every one was busy preparing lessons. The arithmetic class was before the blackboard, answering questions put by the teacher.

"Ulysses Grant," said Gray-beard, "suppose the boards, nails, and work upon your sled cost you fifty-five cents, and you sold it to Edwin Stanton for sixty-three cents, what would be your profit?"

Ulysses moved uneasily, then began counting rapidly with his fingers.

"Stop counting your fingers. Do the sum with your head," said Gray-beard.

Just at this moment something like a shadow appeared at one of the windows, and all faces, except Gray-beard's, turned in that direction. We soon made out that the shadow was the face of an Indian boy with his buffalo robe drawn over his head and spread against the glass to exclude the glare of the sun, so as to give him a better view within the room. His black eyes peered at us, and at every object within sight. The figure withdrew; then we heard a voice speaking in our own language, "Come quick! Come and look at them!"

Soon the windows were darkened by dozens of the queerest-looking heads we had ever seen. Over each face hung two long braids. As the boys pressed their noses against the glass, and wrinkled their brows in trying to see, they made the strangest and most comical of pictures. They pushed and climbed over each other in their eagerness to observe what was going on inside.

We could not help laughing at their appearance.

Edwin nudged me and whispered, "They 're Ponka boys; they wear their scalp-locks in front, and they always have two."

"Don't they look funny?" shouted a Ponka boy at the middle window. "See, see that one!" and he pointed at Warren; "he looks just like a little owl; his hair stands straight up, and he has such big eyes."

Study became impossible, and the class in arithmetic made horrible blunders. Graybeard was disgusted; in vain he rapped the desk with his ruler; and his patience found a limit when Andrew Johnson said that Ulysses' profit would be eleven cents, if he sold his sled for sixty-three cents. He gave the boy a vigorous shaking. This act of discipline delighted the little savages at the window; they shouted with laughter and the ends of their little braids fluttered with the breath of every peal. They interspersed their merriment with comments on our appearance, our clothing, and the absence of scalp-locks on our heads.

"What are they saying?" asked Gray-beard, looking toward the windows.

"They're calling us names," answered Warren, who felt sore at being compared to an owl.

Gray-beard went to the door; as he opened it, the intruders ran swiftly to the fence, and sat astride of the top board.

"Get away from here!" said Gray-beard, in a loud voice. "Go home!"

"How do do! Goo-by!" shouted back some of the little rascals with boisterous jeers.

"Class in history," called Gray-beard as he closed the door; and a number of us stood in line at the usual place.

"Philip Sheridan, can you tell me something of George Washington?"

All eyes turned toward the youngster who answered to the name of George Washington, and who, neglecting his lessons, was now busy drawing on his slate a caricature of a boy against whom he had a grudge. Hearing his name, and thinking he had been caught in his mischief, he looked up with a startled expression, and rose to make a

denial, when Sheridan, fixing his eyes upon him, slowly answered, "He chopped his father's choke-cherry-tree."

The little savages returned to the windows, and began chattering noisily. Suddenly a number of them stood in line, imitating the history class, while one of the big boys took a place before them, mimicking the actions of Gray-beard and the tones of his voice, by giving the peculiar rhythm of English to his own Indian words.

"Ah'-bru-zhe-dae!" he asked; "do you ever wash your face?" And the make-believe class went into fits of laughter.

"Ten sleeps ago," angrily retorted the boy addressed, "you stole some honey, and the smirches of it are still on *your* face!"

The boys were convulsed at this reply, and so were the boys in the school-room; but the mock teacher took a different view of the matter, and sprang at his impudent pupil, boxing his ears, whereat the two fell on each other in a lively tussle. We stretched our necks to see the struggle, and Gray-beard also watched the scene.

All at once a Ponka boy shouted, "I've

found something! Come, come!" and the crowd moved away, leaving the two to finish their wrestling.

Before long we heard a great clatter in the hall-way, and then the Ponka boys were seen marching out of the yard with our sleds. We heard them coasting down the hill, and this made us very restless, so that we could not pay any attention to our lessons. By and by the shouting on the hill-side ceased, and Warren leaned over to Brush and whispered, "They're going off with our sleds!"

Brush raised his right hand; Gray-beard saw him, and asked what he wanted.

"Those Indian boys are going away with our sleds, and we want to go after them."

Permission being given, in a twinkling there were twenty or thirty school-boys charging up the hill, all mad as hornets. We overtook the Ponkas midway between the school and the village. The little savages turned and came to meet us.

"What do you want?" said the big boy who had played teacher.

"We want our sleds," said Brush.

"Come and get them!" was the defiant answer of the Ponka boys.

"That we will do!" answered Brush.

We all moved forward, and then followed a scene hard to describe. A terrific battle took place between us and the robbers; it was hand to hand, and shin to shin, for hands and feet were the only weapons used.

The Ponkas made a determined resistance. I cannot very well relate what happened around me; for I was engaged in a lively bout with an impish-looking little chap for whom I had taken a sudden and unreasonable spite. It was hard to get at him, for he was quick as a wild-cat in his movements, and he gave me a number of vicious blows before I could touch him. I noticed that he was more afraid of my brogans than of my fists; taking advantage of this, I pretended to lift my foot for a fierce kick; he hopped backwards, and, in so doing, bent his body toward me. Quick as a flash, I grasped his two braids, pulled his head down, and brought my right knee up against it with tremendous force, and he went sprawling in the snow.

"Frank, Frank, come here, quick!" It was Brush calling. I turned, and there he lay under two of the Ponkas, who were dealing him heavy blows. In a second I had dragged one of them off, and Brush had his footing again. Some one shouted, "They 're running! they 're running!" and the boys we were fighting broke loose. Then all of us school-boys chased the Ponkas, and drove them into their camp.

We were a bruised lot when we came back to the school; but we had our sleds.

Chapter XIII

The Secret of the Big Seven

THE small boys had been marched to bed at eight o'clock. We, the Middle Five, who, for the first time, were permitted to stay up until ten, — a privilege hitherto enjoyed only by the Big Seven, — sat around the fire listening to Indian tales told by Edwin in his animated way. There was no light in the room save that which came through the open door of the stove, in front of which the story-teller had taken his place. The flickering fire cast a ruddy light upon the fine features of the boy, and the shadows on the wall danced to the caprice of the restless flames. We laughed heartily at the mishaps of Ish-te'-ne-ke, a comical character that figures in the folk-tales of the Omahas, as they were vividly portrayed in language and gesture.

Outside the wind was moaning and sighing through the trees around the house, at times rattling the windows vigorously, as though threatening to rush in upon us; and

from the neighborhood of the graveyard came the mournful sounds of the hooting owl.

In the back part of the school-room, where it was dark, sat the Big Seven, carrying on an earnest conversation in low tones, as though to exclude us from their confidence.

The leader of this "gang" was a youth of peculiar appearance and manner. He was tall and muscular, with prominent nose and cheek-bones. Although he took an active part in the amusements and sports of the school, often inaugurating them himself, we never knew him to change the expression of his face, either in pain, anger, or mirth. We Five often had talks about the peculiarities of this singular youth. Brush said that "Aleck" (the boys addressed him by this name, for he was called after the Macedonian conqueror) was turned outside in, that all his laugh, anger, and sorrow were inside and could n't be seen. Edwin declared that the boy had ceased laughing since the killing of his father by the Sioux, and that he was reserving his laugh for the time when he should take revenge.

The mysterious consultation in the back

part of the school-room came to an end, and one by one the Big Seven approached the stove and mingled with us. Aleck, who was the last, did not sit down in the space left for him, but drew up a desk and perched on one end of it, resting his feet on the bench where he should have sat. He leaned over, supporting his body with his elbow on his knee, and shaded his eyes with his hand. We could feel that for some purpose he was looking into the faces of the Middle Five.

As the Seven took their places among us, Edwin brought his story to a close, and we fell into silence. After a few moments Aleck cleared his throat, and, without change of attitude, said in the Omaha language, fearlessly breaking one of the rules of the school:

"Boys, to you of the Five I speak. There is not a 'gang' in the school that has not its secrets. You of the Five have yours, no doubt; we of the Seven, who now sit with you, have ours. We respect yours, and we have every confidence that you respect ours. Ordinarily we do not interfere with each other's affairs; but now that you have the

same privilege that we have had, and we are thrown together, we of the Seven think that your 'gang' should unite with ours in a secret that up to this time has been ours alone, and share in its pleasures. Are you willing to join in it?"

"Yes," answered Brush, knowing as the rest of us did, what this secret was; "we are willing."

"You of the Seven, are you satisfied with the answer?"

There was silence. "Then," continued the leader of the Seven, "I must have the answer of each one of the Five."

Brush again signified his assent, and the rest of us followed. Having arrived at a mutual understanding which awakened in each one a fraternal feeling, there ensued among all the boys a lively chattering. When the fervor of the friendly demonstration abated, Aleck, in his deep voice, said, "Wa'-tha-dae shu-ge'ha!" (The Word of Command approaches.)

Immediately there was silence, and each one held his breath expectantly, for we recognized the ritual words of "the Leader"

in the game, "Obeying the Command," words which had been sacred to generations of boys who had preceded us.

"Those are the very words," whispered Edwin to me; "now listen, hear where the Command will come from, and where it will go."

"The Word of Command approaches," continued Aleck, with unmoved face; "from the head of the Ne-shu-de [the Missouri] it comes, wrapped in a black cloud, the mantle of thunder, like the mighty whirlwind it comes; the great trees of the pine-clad mountains bend to its fury; its voice echoes through the valleys, and the animals, big and little, tremble with fear. On it comes, sweeping over the wide plains; the angry lightnings dart from the cloud; it approaches the village of the Ponkas, at the mouth of the Niobrara, passes it and continues its course down the Ne-shu'-de; now it has come to the pictured rocks; it reaches the bluffs of the Cut-lake; but on it comes, swifter and swifter it comes; it is now at the old Omaha village, at the graves of the little ones; it comes — it is here!"

There was a pause, and we all waited in suspense. Just then the wind rattled the windows and the owl up in the graveyard hooted.

"George!" called the leader, in a solemn tone.

"Present!" promptly responded George in English, as though answering Gray-beard's roll-call. A ripple of suppressed laughter spread among the boys. Aleck, I doubt not, was giggling inside.

"Edwin!" continued the leader, in the same tone.

"Ah-ho!" said Edwin, giving the response and imitating the voice of a grown-up and serious warrior.

"The Word of Command is before you two," continued Aleck, "the Leader;" "and it is, that soon after Gray-beard has gone to bed you are to go to the village and enter the house of Hae'-sha-ra-gae, where you will see a woman making pemmican. You will say to her, 'Woman!' we are the commanded and the bearers of the word of Command. Of you we demand a bag of pemmican. Give willingly, and you shall

go beyond the four hills of life without stumbling; there shall be no weariness in the pathway of life to hinder your feet, and your grandchildren shall be many and their succession endless!' Fail not in your mission. Your way out of the house shall be through one of the windows in our dormitory, and by a rope."

"It is bed-time, boys, come right up," called Gray-beard, from the head of the stairs. "See that the large doors are bolted."

When we were in bed, Gray-beard went softly downstairs, and we heard him open his door, close it, then lock it. Some of the youngsters were still awake, and, when they heard the closing of Gray-beard's door, began to talk. It seemed as though they would never stop and go to sleep, so that we could carry out the Word of Command. After a while Aleck thought of a plan, and started a game often played by small boys at night; he said, loud enough for the little boys to hear, "Tha'-ka!" Brush and the rest of us repeated the word, one after the other, and each of the wakeful little fellows, according to the rules of the game, was obliged

in his turn to utter the word, and then there was silence, for no one can speak after he has said the word. Soon heavy breathing among the little ones gave sign that they had entered the land of dreams.

It was near the middle of the night when one by one the members of the Big Seven and the Middle Five noiselessly arose. George tiptoed to a corner and brought out a large coil of rope. We went with it to the window directly over that of Graybeard's bed-room. I do not know why we selected that window, the only dangerous one in the dormitory, but there seemed to be a fatality about it. Very softly the window was raised; George slipped the noose at the end of the rope around his body, then climbed through the window. Slowly we let him down the three stories to the ground. Then we hauled the rope up again, and let Edwin down in the same manner. We closed the window, leaving space enough for the rope, which remained dangling.

On entering the village, the two boys were met by a pack of noisy curs that snapped and snarled at their heels. As the

dogs became bolder in their attacks, the lads struck right and left with the heavy sticks they carried; one dog limped away yelping, and another lay thumping his tail on the ground, stunned.

The door of the house designated by the leader of the Big Seven squeaked loudly on its rusty hinges as the boys swung it open without the ceremony of knocking. A woman at work in one corner of the room looked up at them, smiled good-naturedly, and said in a sympathetic tone:

"Such a dark night as this! On what errand do they come, and little White-chests, too?"

Four men were sitting on the floor around a flickering candle playing a game; they too looked up at the sound of the door.

"Oho!" said the man of the house, who was one of the players, "for a long time you have not entered my dwelling on a visit; I fear you will make it rain! Walk around the stove and break the charm."

"Don't mind him," said the woman, kindly; "tell me what you want. Won't you sit down?"

The two boys stood hesitating, then George began in a sepulchral voice, "Woman, we are the commanded, the bearers of the Word of Command. We come to demand of you a bag of pemmican. Give plenty —"

"Willingly," corrected Edwin, in a whisper.

"Willingly, and you shall go beyond the four hills of life without — without —"

"Stumbling," prompted Edwin.

"Stumbling; there shall be no weariness in the pathway of life —" and so on to the end of the ritual.

The woman clapped her hands, and shouted with laughter, as she exclaimed, "If your cloud and lightning and thunder do all you say they will do, they have more power than I supposed they had! Sit down and wait a while, and I will have some pemmican ready for you."

"Did those old White-chests teach you all that?" asked the husband. "If they did, they have been stealing the rituals of some of our priests, and —"

"Oh, let them alone!" said the wife; "they came to see me."

"They came in without knocking on the door; that's bad luck!" the husband continued in his banter; "before entering a house they should knock, as the Whitechests do."

"Be careful, and don't spill it!" said the wife, as she handed a bag to George, who thanked her.

"There they come!" said one of the Seven in a loud whisper, as he felt a tug on the rope that was tied to his arm.

We hastened out of bed, being careful not to make any noise. George and Edwin sent the bag of pemmican first, then they were each pulled up and safely landed.

We had built a fire in a vacant room adjoining our dormitory; into this warm room we repaired with our bag, and sat in a circle on the floor, Indian fashion. On a little table stood the one candle allowed us, shedding a feeble light. Two of the boys had stolen down to the dining-room for plates. Alexander, before whom the bag was placed, divided the pemmican equally, while we listened to George and Edwin's account of their adventure. The plates were passed

around; I put out my hand to help myself from my plate, when a member of the Big Seven stopped me. "Wait," said he; "there is something more to be done."

Aleck looked up; we all became silent; then he took a tiny bit of the pemmican, and held it toward the sky for a moment as a thank offering to Wakonda, then placed it with great solemnity on the floor in the centre of the circle. This done, we fell to eating, telling stories as we feasted, and had one of the most enjoyable nights of our lives.

From time to time through the winter we had these nocturnal banquets, taking turns in going to the village for our supplies; but misfortune overtook us before the season was fairly over.

One dark night we had our meeting as usual, and the Word of Command came to Lester and to Joel of the Big Seven. When the small boys had gone to sleep, we brought out our rope and let Joel down through the window. Then we put the noose around Lester and proceeded to lower him.

It chanced that Gray-beard had lain awake from toothache, and was at that very mo-

ment looking through his window, the curtain of which he had neglected to pull down when he retired, and he saw, slowly descending outside, two dark objects; they grew longer and longer, then they suddenly ceased to move. For an instant he felt a slight shock of fright; but quickly recovering, he gradually made out the form of two feet and two legs without a body. He sprang out of bed, threw open the window, and in a severe tone demanded, "What's this! Who are you; what are you doing?"

Lester struggled frantically to climb the rope; we tried to help him, but a large knot caught the edge of the window-sill, and we could not lift it over, nor could we let Lester down, for one of the Seven had entangled his legs in the coil, and before he had extricated himself, it was too late to save our companion.

"Who are you?" again called Gray-beard, grasping the boy by the trousers.

"It's me, Lester," replied the lad.

Seeing that the game was up, we gently let Lester farther down, and he entered Gray-beard's room through the window.

In the mean time one of the boys had run softly downstairs to open the hall door for Joel, who had not been discovered.

Gray-beard woke us up in the morning at the usual hour, but of the disturbance during the night he said nothing. At breakfast the subject was not mentioned, although we listened with anxious expectation.

To the twelve boys who were engaged in the escapade of the night, it seemed as though the preliminary exercises of the morning school session would never end, so desirous were we to have the punishment, whatever it might be, come quickly and we be rid of suspense. The last name on the roll was called; Gray-beard slowly closed the Register, put it in his desk, and during an impressive silence turned his eyes upon us to scan our faces.

"Lester!" said he, at last, "you will step up to my desk, if you please."

If there was a serious matter on hand, Gray-beard always said, "If you please."

Notwithstanding the very polite invitation extended to him, Lester reluctantly walked to the desk. Every eye but two,

those of Alexander, was fixed upon Gray-beard and Lester. Aleck had taken out his writing-book and was carefully copying the example given at the head of the page, "Honesty is the best policy." He took particular pains with the capital H, finishing the last part with concentric circles.

"What were you doing last night," asked Gray-beard of Lester, "when I caught you outside of my window?"

"I was going down to the ground."

"Were you running away?"

"No, sir."

"Where were you going?"

"I was going to the village."

"What were you going to the village for?"

No answer.

"Who was letting you down; some one must have held the rope in the dormitory, who was it?"

No reply.

"If you don't answer my questions, I shall have to whip you; who else was going with you?"

Lester looked appealingly to Brush, then to Alexander. Aleck was writing the sen-

tence in his book; but, when he heard Gray-beard's threat to whip Lester, he arose without finishing the last word. All eyes turned upon him, and there was a stir among the pupils.

"What is it, Alexander," asked Gray-beard, "what do you know about this strange performance?"

"Lester is not to blame, sir; I made him go out of the window, and I held the rope to let him down."

"And I helped him to do it," came from a voice in another part of the room; it was Brush, who had silently risen; "we compelled the two — we compelled Lester to go out of the window."

"You said there were two boys who were going out of the window, who was the other?" asked Gray-beard, determined to find out all the participants in the mischief.

Those of us who knew, looked toward Joel; an expression of fear stole over his face and he anxiously awaited Brush's answer.

"I did not say that, sir," he replied; "Lester was going down alone."

Joel gave a sigh of relief.

"What made you force the boy to go out of the window; where were you sending him?"

"We were sending him to the village."

"What were you sending him to the village for?"

"I refuse to answer," was the bold reply.

Gray-beard, seeing that there would be no use in questioning Brush, turned to Alexander and asked, "What were you sending Lester to the village for?"

"I was sending him to go there and return."

"Alexander, I want no foolishness; tell me what you were sending Lester to the village for?"

"I refuse to answer."

"This abusing of smaller boys by the large ones, and making them do things that are improper, must be stopped; it has gone far enough. Lester, you may take your seat. Frank, take this knife and get me two good hickory switches. Do you know a hickory-tree?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, as I took the

knife. I knew every kind of tree growing around the school, and I had a suspicion that Gray-beard did not know the difference between a hickory sapling and some others. I cut two formidable-looking switches of linden, closely resembling hickory. I had time to fully doctor only one of the switches, by driving the knife-blade deep into the wood every two or three inches. When I entered the school-room, Gray-beard took a glance at the switches, then said:

"Alexander and Brush will step to my desk and take off their coats."

The two boys stood in their shirt sleeves; I kept watch of Gray-beard's eyes, and saw that he was going to take Brush first; so when he was ready I handed him the fully doctored switch.

"Is that hickory?" he asked, trying it on the air; "I suspect it is n't."

I made no reply.

"Stand in the middle of the floor," said Gray-beard to Brush.

He did so. Gray-beard brought down the stick heavily on Brush's shoulders, an inch of the sapling broke; then he struck

faster and faster, and at each stroke a piece flew off. Brush stood with clenched fists, determined not to show any flinching; but we could see that he felt keenly the blows. He went to his desk, and buried his face in his arms.

"I am afraid this is n't hickory," said Gray-beard, throwing on the floor the stump of the switch. "I know this one is," and he dealt blow after blow on the broad shoulders of Alexander, who gave no sign of pain. The boy stood unmoved, every muscle relaxed, even his hands were open, showing no emotion whatever. The stick was worn out, and Gray-beard threw the stump on the floor.

Aleck put on his coat, then, with head uplifted and unfaltering steps, went to his desk, took his pen, and completed the unfinished word of the motto.

Chapter XIV

A Rebuke

IT was Saturday, a day of delight for the boys and girls of the Mission school, for to them it was a day of rest from the toil of study, and a visit home was permitted. On this morning the allotted chores were performed with redoubled energy; for the sooner the tasks were done, the earlier would be the start for home, the sooner the pleasures laid out for the day would begin.

The boys who had finished their work and had reported to the superintendent were already on their way to the village, shouting and singing as they went. Edwin watered the horses, and I started the hydraulic ram; then, having received our formal leave to go, we chased each other up the hill toward the village, and wrestled until we came to the place where the path branched; he took one way and I the other, but we continued to chaff back and forth until we were out of hearing.

After greeting my father and mother, the

first thing I did was to run over to the barn and see the horses. When I had rubbed the noses of Kushas and Hintu and the rest, and had pitched down from the loft a lot of hay for them, I stepped over to Ka-he'-num-ba's house and looked in at the door, which stood wide open. His wife was sitting near the stove, quietly working on a pair of moccasins.

"Where is Ga-im'-ba-zhe?" I shouted.

"Oh! how you startled me!" she said. "Your uncle has gone to the stable with other boys; he left word for you to go there when you came."

Hardly had she finished speaking before I was off like the wind. On the ground by a fire sat Ga-im'-ba-zhe and the boys, all busy making game-sticks, the Indian name of which we Mission boys translated into English as "bone slides." These were made out of willow saplings. After cutting the stick the proper length, the bark was removed, and a narrow strip of it wound around the peeled stick, which was then held over the blaze of the fire until the exposed part was scorched. When the binding

was removed, the game-stick presented a mottled appearance, something like a snake.

The brown bodies of these partly nude little savages glistened against the sun as they worked, while the breezes played with their black totemic locks. They were not aware of my approach until I pitched a corn-cob into their midst, when they all threw up their heads to see who was coming.

"Ho! Little White-chest!" exclaimed Gaim'-ba-zhe. "Have you come home?"

"Yes, I have come home," I replied; "but I don't want you to call me White-chest."

"Sit down," said one of the little brownies. "When we have done, we will give you some, then you can play with us."

When the sticks were finished, I was given five or six of them. The tallest boy led the game. He grasped the small end of the game-stick with his right hand, bracing the top with a finger, then he took two or three quick side-long steps and threw the stick against the ground with all the force he could command; it bounded up and shot through the air like an arrow. The next boy threw one of his sticks in the same

manner, and from the same place. All the others played, each in his turn. Then one of the boys shouted, "Your turn, little White-chest. Throw hard!"

I was familiar with the game, and by practice had acquired some skill in throwing the sticks. I selected one that seemed to have the proper weight and feeling, took the usual position, and crouching almost to the earth, I threw my stick with all the force that I could muster. We watched its flight until it touched the ground and slid along, far beyond any stick that had been thrown.

"Woo-hoo!" exclaimed the boys, "he has beaten us all; he's won all our sticks!"

"Kill him! kill him! He's nothing but a thieving Winnebago!" This cry came from the west end of the village, not far from where we were playing. Startled by the angry words, we paused in our sport, and looked in that direction. A crowd began to gather and move along the path that led out of the village.

"What are they doing? Let's go and see," cried Ga-im'-ba-zhe.

We all rushed forward on a keen run, and reached the crowd; there we saw a lad, a little larger than we were, struggling to get away from a swarm of boys and young men who were throwing stones and sticks at him. He was a pitiful object, and why they should abuse him so was more than we could understand. His legs and feet were bare; he carried on his arm something that resembled a worn-out blanket, and in his hand he held tightly a piece of bread. He belonged to the Winnebago tribe, against whom at that time there was much prejudice among the Omahas. Mud was thrown at him; he was pushed and jostled by the crowd, and some persons kicked him. Slowly the boy retreated, at times stopping to look with pleading eyes at his merciless persecutors. When he started to run, some one threw a stick of wood before him; he struck his foot against it and fell; then the crowd laughed.

"They are doing wrong!" exclaimed Gaim'-ba-zhe. "They ought not to do that!"

"I think so, too," I added; "but what can we do?"

Just then I felt a tug at my sleeve. I

turned to see who it was, and there stood the boy that did errands for my father. "Your father wants you to come home," he said.

I was a little troubled at this, for the boy spoke in a frightened tone. At that moment a man came up and cried in a loud voice:

"You are commanded to cease molesting the boy!"

Recognizing the speaker as a messenger coming from the chief, the rabble dispersed in groups, like angry wolves.

My mind was uneasy as I went toward home, and I felt guilty, though I could not understand why. As I entered the house I was ushered into my father's presence. He was talking earnestly to a number of men who sat on the floor smoking a pipe which they passed from hand to hand. Among them I recognized Ka-he'-num-ba (the father of Ga-im'-ba-zhe), Te-o'-ke-ha, Du'-ba-mo-ne, Wa-hon'-i-ge (Edwin's father), and other prominent men of the village. My father seemed to take no notice of my entrance, but kept on talking. When he had finished speaking, his eyes rested on me, and after a

moment's pause, he said, "Son, step to the middle of the floor." I did so. Then in a low tone he began:

"I speak not boastfully; all who are here have known me from boyhood, and will know what I am about to say to you is true. Even before I grew to be your size I was left to face the difficulties of life. I have felt the pangs of hunger and the chills of winter, but, by ceaseless struggles, I overcame poverty and gathered about me, as I grew to manhood, many of the things that make life bearable; yet I did not cease to struggle. I have won honors and position among our people, and the respect of the tribes having friendly relations with us. Success has attended me; but, remembering my early struggles, I suppressed vanity, and gave help to the poor. When journeying with my people, if I saw any of them weary and footsore, I gave them horses, and sent them away singing for joy. The stranger who entered my door never left it hungry. No one can accuse me of having tormented with abuse the poverty-stricken man. Early I sought the society of those who knew the

teaching of the chiefs. From them I learned that kindness and hospitality win the love of a people. I culled from their teachings their noblest thoughts, and treasured them, and they have been my guide. You came into existence, and have reached the age when you should seek for knowledge. That you might profit by the teachings of your own people and that of the white race, and that you might avoid the misery which accompanies ignorance, I placed you in the House of Teaching of the White-chests, who are said to be wise and to have in their books the utterances of great and learned men. I had treasured the hope that you would seek to know the good deeds done by men of your own race, and by men of the white race, that you would follow their example and take pleasure in doing the things that are noble and helpful to those around you. Am I to be disappointed?"

As his talk progressed, he grew eloquent, and louder and louder became his tones. My eyes were riveted upon him. In every feature of his handsome face there was reflected a mind, a will, a determination

that nothing could break. He arose to his feet and continued, pointing his finger at me:

"Only to-day there crept to the door of my house a poor boy driven thither by hunger; he was given food by my command. Having satisfied for the time being his craving, he went away happy. Hardly had he left the village, when a rabble gathered about him and persecuted him. They threw mud at him, pointed at him their fingers in derision, and laughed rudely at his poverty, and you, a son of E-sta'-ma-za, joined the tormentors and smiled at the poor boy's tears."

I winced at this accusation. He could accuse me of almost anything; but of this I was not guilty. A hesitating small voice at the door said, "He did not join them!" It was the little boy that came after me who spoke. I was grateful for this defence, but, as though he had not heard it, my father continued.

"By your presence you aided and encouraged those wicked boys. He who is present at a wrong-doing, and lifts not a

hand to prevent it, is as guilty as the wrong-doers. The persecution of the poor, the sneer at their poverty is a wrong for which no punishment is too severe. I have finished. Go, and think of my words."

Those at the door made way for me; I passed out and entered my mother's room. She looked up at me with a kindly smile; but I flung myself down on her bed, buried my face in the pillows, sobbing. My mother did not speak, but went on with her work. When I had regained my composure, she bade me come and sit beside her. I did so. She put an arm around me, and said in a caressing tone, "What is it that makes my little boy cry?" I told her. She sat in silence for a while, and then spoke:

"Your father is right; you must be guided by his words. You had a chance to do good; you let it slip away from you. That poor boy came and sat at the door, the humblest place in your house; he did not beg, but the eyes he turned upon your father and on me told a tale of suffering. At your father's bidding, I placed food with my own hands before the boy; when he had finished eating

he arose without a word and, taking with him what was left of the food, he went out, giving me a look that bespoke his gratitude. My boy must learn to be good and kind. When you see a boy barefooted and lame, take off your moccasins and give them to him. When you see a boy hungry, bring him to your home and give him food."

The mild words and the gentle touch of her hand were like ointment to my wounds. When she had finished speaking, I put my arms around her neck and kissed her.

On my way back to the Mission I saw a lad standing at the fork of the paths. It was little Bob. "Come, hurry!" he said; "I've been waiting for you." Together we returned to the school.

After supper I went out and lay on the grass, looking up into the blue sky, thinking. Twilight came, then darkness. A bell rang, and all the boys went upstairs to bed. I followed. We knelt by our beds; Gray-beard rapped on the banister with his pen-knife; when there was silence, he said slowly, and in a low tone, "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." We

repeated with him this prayer that was taught over a thousand years ago. The tardy ones with labored breathing cut almost every word; but I repeated them carefully, and, although I had said them a hundred times before, now, for the first time since I had been in the school, I began to wonder what they meant.

Lester, Edwin, and I got into bed; my place was in the middle.

"Frank, what makes you so quiet?" asked Lester, nudging me with his elbow.

Before I could answer Edwin began tugging at the sheet, saying, "Lester, you've too much sheet over there!"

They both pulled the bedcovers and kicked at each other good-naturedly for a while, and then quieted down. I received some of the kicks too, but did not join in the fun. There was silence for a time, and then Edwin said, "Say, boys, I've been feeling bad this afternoon. When I got home from the river, my father scolded me like everything. He said something about my being with some boys who teased a poor Winnebago boy, and he talked to me a

long time. He never give me chance to say I did n't see a Winnebago boy to-day; I was all the morning down to the river swimming. I couldn't understand it, and I don't now. Say, Frank, does your father scold you sometimes?"

"Edwin, tell us a story," I said.

"Do!" exclaimed the other boys. "Tell us a story."

Chapter XV

Joe

IT was recess. The laughter and shouts of the boys, as they chased each other and wrestled, mingled with the song of the wren and other birds that inhabited the woods surrounding the school. Not less merry or boisterous were the laughter and calls of the girls, although their territory for play was limited and fenced in, to keep them from too free a communication with the rougher sex. Study and work were forgotten, and every boy and girl romped in the sunshine, and the atmosphere around seemed to be alive with happiness.

Suddenly the boys began to gather curiously around two objects upon the ground. The girls, seeing this unusual stir, came running to their fence, climbed up as far as they dared, and asked the nearest boys what it was that attracted so large a crowd.

It was a pitiful scene, — there, sitting on the green grass, was a crippled old woman of

about seventy or eighty years, speaking in the kindest and gentlest of tones, with inflections of the voice hard to describe, but which brought to one's mind the twittering of a mother bird to its young, and passing her crooked fingers and wrinkled hands over the brown back of a miserable, naked, little boy who was digging his chubby fists in his eyes to squeeze away the tears that flowed incessantly.

"Don't cry! my little grandson," she was saying; "don't cry! These White-chests are kind; they will clothe and feed you. I can no longer take care of you, so I must give you to them. See these boys, what nice caps and coats and pants they have! You will have these things, too, and you will have plenty to eat. The White-chests will be good to you; I will come and see you very often. Don't cry!"

But the boy cried all the harder, twisting his fists into his eyes, and the old woman continued her caressing twittering.

The bell rang, and there was a rush for the school-room. When the hard breathing, coughing, aud shuffling into position at the

desks had ceased, the door was gently pushed open, and the old woman entered, tenderly urging the unwilling little brown body forward into the room, still weeping. Addressing Gray-beard, who was watching the scene with a queer smile on his lips, the old woman said:

"I have brought my little boy to give him to the White-chests to raise and to educate. On account of my age and feebleness, I am no longer able to care for him. I give him to you, and I beg that he be kindly treated. That is all I ask."

Without waiting for an answer, the poor creature, with tears streaming down her furrowed cheeks, limped out of the room, making a cheerless clatter with her heavy stick as she moved away. The little boy, recovering from his bewilderment, turned to see if his grandmother was still near by, and, finding that she had gone, gave a piteous wail, and fell to the floor, sobbing violently.

Who was this wretched little boy? He was his mother's son, that 's all. He had no father, that is, none to caress and fondle him as other boys had. A man had presented

the name of the boy to the Agent to be entered on the annuity rolls, only to that selfish extent recognizing the lad as his son.

The mother died while the child still needed her tender care, and the little one was left all alone in this great world that plays with the fortunes of men and nations. The place of death was in a dreary little tent, the rags of which flapped and fluttered in the force of the merciless winds, as though in sympathy with the melancholy situation. No loving husband or father was there to prepare the body for its last resting-place, and to give the helpless babe the nourishment for which it cried. Not even a relative was there; the dead woman had none among the people; she belonged to another tribe.

As the mother lay an unburied corpse, and her child wailing, a figure bent with age was plodding by. It was an old woman; slowly she put her heavy stick forward, then took a step, as though measuring every movement. When she came near the tent, she stopped, for the distressing wail had pierced her ears. She raised her trembling hand to her brow, looked up to the tent, then to the

surroundings. The wailing went on, and the decrepit old woman hastened toward the tent as fast as she was able to go, and entered. For a moment she stood still, contemplating the scene before her, then from the fountains of her tender heart arose tears, impelled not by the sympathy that naturally springs from the love of friend or kindred, but by that nobler and higher feeling which lifts one toward God, — the sympathy for human kind.

Thus it was that this kind-hearted old woman took the homeless little child to her tent and cared for him. The two were inseparable until the grandmother, as she was called by the boy, felt that she was fast approaching the time when she would be summoned to join her fathers in the spirit-land; so, to provide for the child's future, she had brought him to the school.

The naming of a new pupil was usually an occasion for much merriment, but this time there was no enthusiasm. The school seemed to be in sympathy with the grandmother who went away weeping. Instead of raising their hands, as was their wont, to

suggest names, they sought to hide their feeling by poring over their books.

"Come," said Gray-beard, "we must have a name for this youngster. Be quick and suggest one."

There was no response. Finally a big boy, who was busy over his lessons, said without lifting his head, "Call him Joseph."

So Gray-beard entered that name on the school Register.

Joe, as he was called by the boys, grew rapidly, but the helplessness of infancy clung to him. Because he could not fight, he became the butt of every trick a school-boy could devise, and there was no one who would do battle for him. If a big boy looked hard at him he would howl, and if one of his size rushed at him threateningly, he would shrink with fear. He was incapable of creating any mischief, yet he was continually stumbling into scrapes.

One sultry afternoon as I was sitting in the shade of the walnut-tree in front of the school, busy making a sling for Bob out of an old shoe, Joe came up to us, and dropped on his hands and knees. With the

greatest interest he watched me cut the leather into a diamond shape; after a while he ventured to ask, "What yer makin'?"

"Wait and see," I answered, and went on working. When I had finished the sling-strap or pocket, I cut from the lappets of my buckskin moccasin two strings, making a noose at the end of one, and then fastened both strings to the sling-strap. Although I did not say anything about it, I had determined to make one for Joe as soon as I had shown Bob how to use the sling. He tried to find out from Bob what I was making; but that little chap would not speak to him.

When the sling was finished, I told Bob to gather some rusty nails and pebbles. He was off with a jump, and returned with a good supply in an amazingly short time. Joe still sat watching, with eyes and mouth wide open. I put a nail in the sling-strap, and, to show Bob how to use the sling, swung it around three or four times, then threw out my arm with force, letting one end of the string slip, and the nail sped on its way through the air, singing. Bob clapped his hands with delight.

A crow was flying lazily over head, croaking as he went. I sent a stone whizzing up to him; it barely missed his head, and he turned a complete somersault in the air, to our great amusement.

"I 'm goin' to make one too!" said Joe, suddenly rising and hunting around for materials.

I paid no attention to him, but went on teaching Bob how to throw stones with the sling, little thinking that we were drifting toward an incident which gave Joe much pain temporarily and left an impression on my immature mind unfavorable to the Whitechests which lasted many, many years.

"Mine 's done!" exclaimed Joe, holding up a sling he had made out of rotten rags.

"Don't use it," I made haste to say, "and I 'll make you a good one."

He paid no heed to my words, but went on trying to balance stones in the old piece of rag. The stones dropped before he could swing the sling and throw them. Bob kept me busy throwing stones for him, for he was afraid of hitting the boys who were on the hillside near by playing tag, or of sending a

pebble over the fence, where the girls were singing and chatting over some of their games.

"Look now, look!" cried Joe. I turned to see what he was doing. He had succeeded in balancing a clod of earth nearly as large as his head in the rag sling, and was about to swing it.

Just at this moment Gray-beard came out of the carpenter's shop and, shading his eyes with a newspaper, he called loudly to one of the boys who was playing tag, "Ulysees! Ulysees!" He inflated his lungs to call for the third time, and with greater volume of voice. Joe had swung the clod of earth around for the second time, and it was half way up for the third round when the string broke; released from its holdings, the clod flew into the air, revolving, and dropping loose particles as it went. I held my breath as I watched it, for I saw just where it was going to strike.

In throwing a stone at some object, I used to imagine that by keeping a steady eye on the stone and bending my body in the direction I desired it to go, I could make the

missile reach the place aimed at. In this instance, although I did not throw the clod, I unconsciously bent my body sidewise, keeping my eyes steadily on the lump of earth to draw it away from the spot for which it was making. The two other boys watched with frightened faces.

Gray-beard, with head thrown back, lips parted, and chest expanded, called, "Uly—!" when the diminutive planet, which I was trying to guide by my force of will, struck him in the chest, and burst in a thousand bits. For a moment there was coughing and sputtering; then Gray-beard drew out his handkerchief, dusted his beard, and his white shirt front. He looked around to see where the missile that struck him came from. I wished that we three could sink into the earth, or else turn into nothing, as Gray-beard's eyes rested upon us.

"Come here!" he demanded with a vigorous gesture. Like so many guilty curs we walked up to him.

"Which one of you did it?" he cried, grasping me by the collar and shaking me until my teeth chattered.

Joe cringed and cried; it was a confession. I was about to say, "he did n't mean to do it;" when the infuriated man turned, went into the shop, and in a moment came back with a piece of board.

"Hold out your hand!" he said, addressing the shrinking boy.

Joe timidly held out his left hand, keeping his eyes all the while on the uplifted board, which came down with force, but not on the little hand that had been withdrawn to escape the blow. Gray-beard sprang at the boy, caught his hand, and attempted to strike it; but the boy pulled away and the board fell with a vicious thud on the wrist of the man, who now turned white with rage. Catching a firm grip on the hand of the boy, Gray-beard dealt blow after blow on the visibly swelling hand. The man seemed to lose all self-control, gritting his teeth and breathing heavily, while the child writhed with pain, turned blue, and lost his breath.

It was a horrible sight. The scene in the school-room when the naked little boy was first brought there by the old woman rose

before me; I heard the words of the grandmother as she gave the boy to Gray-beard, "I beg that he be kindly treated; that is all I ask!" And she had told the child that the White-chests would be kind to him.

Poor Joe, I did what I never would have done if a boy of his own size had thrashed him, I took him by the hand and tried to comfort him, and cared for his bruises.

As for Gray-beard, I did not care in the least about the violent shaking he had given me; but the vengeful way in which he fell upon that innocent boy created in my heart a hatred that was hard to conquer.

The day was spoiled for me; I partly blamed myself for it, though my plans had been to make the two little boys happy, but misery came instead. After supper I slipped away from my companions, and all alone I lay on the grass looking up at the stars, thinking of what had happened that afternoon. I tried to reconcile the act of Gray-beard with the teachings of the Missionaries, but I could not do so from any point of view.

All the boys had come together in the yard, and some one called out, "Let's play pull." So they divided into two groups, grading each according to the size of the boys. Two of the strongest were selected, one from each side; they held a stout stick between them, then on each side the boys grasped each other around the waist. When all were ready, they began to pull, every boy crying, "Hue! Hue!" as he tugged and strained. In the dusk the contending lines looked like two great dark beasts tearing at each other and lashing their tails from side to side. Bob and Joe were at the very end of one side; Bob had tied a bit of rope around his waist, and Joe had hold of that with his only serviceable hand. The pulling lasted for quite a while; finally one side drew the other over the mark; the game ended, and the boys noisily disbanded.

"Frank! Frank!" I heard; it was Edwin and the rest of the "gang."

"Here I am," I called out, and they gathered around me.

"Joe's hand is awful swelled up," said

Bob, as he threw himself down on the grass.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Warren.

"Gray-beard beat Joe's hand like everything; he was so mad I thought he'd kill the boy." Then I recounted the scene, adding, "I can't think of anything else; it was awful!"

"Did he do anything to you?" asked Edwin.

"He shook me right hard when he asked me who did it; but when he saw Joe crying he knew who it was; then he let go of me and whipped him."

Brush had been listening to my story without a word; now he arose and said, "Boys, stay here till I come back."

He went into the house and knocked at the superintendent's door.

"I'm glad to see you Brush," said the superintendent, kindly. "Have you finished the book, and do you want another?"

"No, sir; I wish to speak to you about something that happened to-day, which I don't think is quite right, and I thought you

ought to know about it." Then he told in a simple straightforward manner the story of Joe's punishment.

When Brush had finished, the superindent sent for Gray-beard. For a long time the two men talked earnestly together. At length Brush returned, and said, as he took his seat among us:

"Boys, that will not happen again. Gray-beard says he 's sorry he did it, and I believe him."

Chapter XVI

The Break

"BRUSH! Brush! Brush!" I ran calling one morning soon after breakfast, down to the barn, to the spring, and back to the house, but I could not find the boy; then I thrust my fingers into my mouth and blew a loud robin call, and the answer came from under a tree up on the hillside. I ran hurriedly to the place; there lay Brush in the shade on the green grass reading.

The occasion of this excited search and call was the announcement by the superintendent that the school would be closed that day, and the children dismissed, so that they might go and see their parents, it being reported by an Indian who had come for his little girl that the people had just returned from the hunt.

"I been everywhere trying to find you," I said to Brush. "My folks have come home. Put that old book away and come go with me to see them. There is n't going to be any school to-day."

"Frank, it 's right good of you to ask me, but I don't feel very well; I think I better not go," he replied, in a tone of disappointment. "All my bones ache, and I don't know what 's the matter with me; but you go 'long, boy, and have a good time; you can tell me all about your visit when you come back."

"I 'm sorry you can't go, Brush; but I 'll come back soon and bring you some buffalo meat," I said, starting to go; "you better think about it again and come."

"I think I better stay home and be quiet," he answered, opening his book.

I spent all the forenoon with my parents, and in the afternoon I went in search of some of my village playmates. I found a number of them on the hillside shooting with their bows and arrows. They gave me a noisy welcome in mock English, which made me laugh heartily; then I had to wrestle with one or two of them, and when our peculiar greetings were over, the boys resumed their play, in which they let me join, one of them lending me his bow and arrows.

Our shooting from mark to mark, from one prominent object to another, brought us to a high hill overlooking the ripe fields of corn on the wide bottom below, along the gray Missouri. Here and there among the patches of maize arose little curls of blue smoke, while men and women moved about in their gayly-colored costumes among the broad green leaves of the corn; some, bending under great loads on their backs, were plodding their way laboriously to the fires whence arose the pretty wreaths of smoke.

"They 're making sweet corn," exclaimed one of the youngsters whose little naked brown back glinted against the afternoon sun, and he pointed to the workers in the field.

As we stood watching the busy, picturesque scene below us, one little fellow held his bow close to his ear and began strumming on the string, then all the rest played on their bows in the same manner, until one of them suddenly broke into a victory song, in which the others joined.

At the close of the song they gave me a

graphic description of the attack on the camp when it was pitched on the Republican river. Although the enemy was repulsed, and the hunting ground secured to our people, the battle cost many lives, several of the enemy's warriors were left on the field, and the Omahas lost some of their bravest men.

While yet the boys were telling of the thrilling incidents of the battle, we arose with a sudden impulse and rushed down the hill with loud war-cries, as though attacking the foe, the tall grass snapping against our moccasined feet as we sped along. We were rapidly approaching a house which stood alone, when one of the older boys who was running ahead suddenly stopped and raised his hand as though to command silence. Immediately our shouts ceased, and, seeing the serious look on the lad's face, "What is it?" we asked in frightened tones as we gathered about him.

Without a word he pointed to a woman who was cutting the tall sunflower stalks that had almost hidden her little dwelling with their golden blossoms. Her long black

hair flowed over her shoulders unbraided, a sign of mourning. Now and again she would pause in her work to look up at the humble home and utter sighs and sobs that told a tale of sorrow. Mingled with these outpourings of grief came often the words, "My husband! my little child!" with terms of endearment and tenderness for which I can find no equivalent in English. On a blanket spread over the ground near by sat a tot of a child babbling to itself and making the beheaded sunflowers kiss each other, innocently oblivious of its mother's grief. It was a sad home-coming for the woman; the spirit of her husband had fled to the dark clouds of the west to join the host of warriors who had died on the field of battle, and his bones lay bleaching in the sands of a far-off country.

"It is Gre-don-ste-win weeping for her husband who was killed in the battle last summer," whispered the big boy; "let us go away quietly."

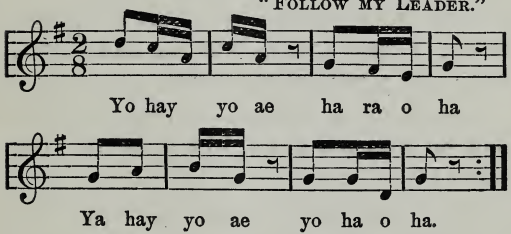
When we had withdrawn to a distance where we were sure our noise would not disturb the mourner, one of the boys called

out, "Let's play Oo-hae'ba-shon-shon!" (Tortuous path). Years after I learned that this game was played by the children of the white people, and that they called it, "Follow my leader."

We graded ourselves according to size, the biggest boy at the head as leader. Each one took hold of the belt of the boy in front of him, and then we started off at a rapid jog-trot, keeping time to this little song which we sang at the top of our voices.

CHILDREN'S SONG

"FOLLOW MY LEADER."



Whatever the leader did, all were bound to do likewise. If he touched a post, we touched it too; if he kicked the side of a tent, all of us kicked it; so on we went, winding around the dwellings, in and out of

vacant lodges, through mud puddles and queer, almost inaccessible places, and even entering the village, where we made the place ring with our song.

At last, tired out, the boys broke line and scattered to their homes. It was then that I suddenly realized the lateness of the hour, and remembered my promise to Brush. I ran to the house, took a hurried leave of my parents, picked up the package of buffalo meat my mother had prepared for my schoolmate, and fairly flew over the hill between the village and the Mission.

As I came running down the hill to the school I saw Lester, Warren, and Edwin sitting in a row on the fence.

"Hello!" I shouted, "what you sitting on that fence for, like a lot of little crows?"

No answer came, nor did the boys move. I began to wonder if they were displeased with me, although I could not think of anything I had done to give them offence. As I drew near, I noticed that the expression on their faces indicated alarm rather than displeasure, and, becoming anxious in my turn,

I hurriedly asked, "What's the matter; what's happened; where's Brush?"

The boys looked at one another, then at me; finally Lester replied, almost with a sob, "Brush is awful sick; he's been raising blood; they sent for the Doctor."

"Where is he? I must go see him," I said, springing over the fence, and starting toward the house.

"He's in that little room next the girls' play-room; but they won't let anybody see him," said Warren.

I went to the room in which Brush lay, and knocked very gently on the door. There was a rustling movement inside, then the door slowly opened and one of the lady teachers stood before me.

"What is it, Frank?" she asked in a low tone.

I tried to look over her shoulder to see the bed, but she was too tall. "I want to see Brush; can't I see him? They say he is sick. I want to see him a moment," I pleaded. "I'm just come back from the village, and brought some buffalo meat I promised him."

"No, Frank, you cannot see him," was the reply. "He is very sick. The superintendent is with him trying to relieve his suffering. Run away now," said the lady, stroking my bare head with her small hand. "Don't make any noise, and tell the rest of the boys to be very quiet."

I went away reproaching myself for not coming back from the village soon, as I told Brush I would. When I rejoined the boys, they looked anxiously into my face, and Edwin asked, "Did you see him?"

"No, they would not let me." After a pause, I asked, "When did he get sick; who was with him?"

"It was under the walnut-tree," said Lester; "he was reading to us about Joseph, out of his little black Bible he always carries. He began to cough hard and choke; he dropped the book all covered with blood, and took hold of my brother's arm. I ran to tell the superintendent. Just as they carried Brush into the house, Edwin came back and we told him about it."

In the evening, after the small boys had gone to bed, the doctor came, a tall gray-

haired man. At the gate he was met by the superintendent, and the two walked slowly up the steps, talking earnestly. We four had been watching for the doctor on the porch; as he came along we caught now and then a word, but we did not understand its meaning. We judged by the shaking of the doctor's head that he thought Brush's case was serious.

Days passed; the doctor came and went; yet Brush's door was closed to us, nor had we any hopeful news of him. We missed him sadly; we missed his whittling, his harmless scolding; and our play was only half-hearted.

Indians who came to the school on business missed his ready offer of help. There was no one to take his place; no one who could interpret for them as well as he. Each one, as he went away, left a word of cheer for the lad, with expressions of hope for his recovery.

As school was dismissed one afternoon, the teacher gave special injunctions to the scholars not to make any noise as they passed out, or while moving about the house, so as not to disturb the sick boy. We four strolled toward the spring. Frost

had come, and the leaves were beginning to turn red and yellow. Wild geese flew noisily overhead, fleeing from the coming winter to sunnier climes. While we were counting, as we often did, the gray birds, floating through the air like a great V, Warren suddenly exclaimed, "Say, boys, plums!"

We looked at him inquiringly. "Let's go get plums for Brush!" he continued excitedly. Then we remembered that we had pre-empted a small grove of choice plum bushes at the head of the ravine, as against all the boys of the school, and acquired a right in it which even the Big Seven respected.

Edwin ran to the kitchen and borrowed from one of the cooks a small tin pail. We hurried to our orchard, where we saw no signs of trespass; the bushes were laden with beautiful ripe fruit. We filled the little pail with the choicest, then each one picked for himself. It was nearly supper-time when we appeared at Brush's door. The three boys looked at me; so I tapped very gently, and the teacher who was nursing the sick boy opened the door.

"We've brought some plums for Brush," I said, offering the tin pail.

"That's very nice," said the lady, softly; "I will give them to him." She was about to close the door, when I whispered, "Can we take just a little look at him?"

"Yes," she answered, throwing the door open.

We four leaned forward and looked in. A smile lit up Brush's face as he saw us. "How are you now?" I asked, in a loud whisper.

"I'm all right," he whispered back, although his hollow eyes and cheeks told a tale that stole away all our hopes. We withdrew, and the door was slowly closed.

Next morning as I was coming down from the dormitory I paused at Brush's door to listen. I heard footsteps moving about softly, then the door opened and one of the big girls came out with a white pitcher in her hand. I started to go on downstairs, when she called to me in a whisper, "Frank, go down to the spring and get some fresh water for Brush, will you, that's a good boy?"

I took the pitcher and went quietly downstairs. As soon as I was outside the yard, I ran as hard as I could to the spring, glad at the prospect of a chance to see my friend again. Warren and Lester met me as I was coming up the hill.

"Did you see him?" one of them asked.

"No, but I'm going to," I answered.

"Ask him if we can do anything for him?" said Lester.

Just as I reached the head of the stairs the same big girl appeared. I handed her the pitcher; she took it and was about to enter the room, when I caught her arm. "Just let me take a look at Brush, will you?" I whispered.

"No, Frank, I can't. Superintendent says to let nobody in."

I heard a cough, then a feeble voice say pleadingly, "Maria, let him in, just a minute!"

The girl looked cautiously around, then said to me, "Come, but don't let anybody see you. Don't stay long, be quick!"

I stepped in, and a thin hand was stretched out to receive me. "I can't talk much, I'm so

weak," said Brush. Overcome with emotion, I could not speak but stood holding his hot hand. The girl at the door moved uneasily.

"Tell the boys I'm all right," said Brush. "They must n't worry. Come nearer." I bent over him and he whispered, "To-night, when everybody is asleep, come down and see me. I want to talk to you when I'm alone."

As night came on we four sat under the walnut-tree watching Brush's window. A candle was lit, then the curtain was drawn. Below in the dining-room, the large girls moved quietly to and fro, busy with their evening work. When this was finished, they gathered at the door, and softly sang that beautiful hymn, "Nearer my God to Thee." We joined in the chorus, the wind wafting the words to the broad skies. The singing came to a close; the dining-room lights were put out, and we were called to bed.

As we knelt by the side of our beds to repeat the Lord's prayer, I could not keep back the tears that came, thinking of the emaciated little form that I was to see once more that night.

One by one the boys fell asleep, and I alone, among the forty or fifty in that big room, remained awake. The clock down in Gray-beard's room struck eleven; the only sounds that came to my ears were those of the heavy breathing of the boys, the soughing of the wind through the trees, the rushing of the waters in the river, and now and then the calls of the wild geese, migrating in the night.

The clock struck the hour of twelve; I sat up listening. There was a stir and the sound of a voice that startled me. It was only Warren moving and talking in his sleep. I went stealthily to the head of the stairs, then listened again. I could only hear the throbbing of my heart, and the rasping pulsations in my ears. After a pause which seemed interminable, I put one foot down the first step, the board sprang under my weight, and creaked. Again I paused to listen; there was no stir, and I went on. Every little sound in the stillness of the night seemed exaggerated, and I was often startled, but I went on and reached the door of Brush's room. I scratched the panel

three times. There was a movement within, and a slight cough. Slowly I turned the knob and opened the door. I entered, closed the door, but left it unlatched.

A candle stood burning in the midst of a number of bottles on a little table near the head of the bed. I knelt by the bedside, and Brush put his arm around my neck. We were silent for a while, finally he whispered in the Omaha tongue:

"I 'm glad you came; I 've been wanting to talk to you. They tell me I am better; but I know I am dying."

Oppressed with ominous dread, I cried out, interrupting him, "Don't say that! Oh, don't say that!"

But he went on, "You must n't be troubled; I 'm all right; I 'm not afraid; I know God will take care of me. I have wanted to stay with you boys, but I can't. You 've all been good to me. My strength is going, I must hurry, — tell the boys I want them to learn; I know you will, but the other boys don't care. I want them to learn, and to think. You 'll tell them, won 't you?"

He slipped his hand under the pillow,

brought out his broken-bladed jack-knife, and put it in my hand, then said, "I wish I had something to give to each one of the boys before I go. I have nothing in the world but this knife. I love all of you; but you understand me, so I give it to you. That's all. Let me rest a little, then you must go."

After a moment's stillness the door opened very gently, and the floor near it creaked as though there were footsteps. A breath of wind came and moved the flickering flame of the candle round and round. The boy stared fixedly through the vacant doorway. There was something strange and unnatural in his look as, with one arm still around me, he stretched the other toward the door, and, in a loud whisper, said, "My grandfather! He calls me. I'm coming, I'm coming!"

There was a sound as of a movement around the room; Brush's eyes followed it until they again rested upon the open door, which swung to with a soft click; then he closed his eyes.

I crept closer to the sick boy; I was quiv-

ering with fear. Brush opened his eyes again, he had felt me trembling. "Are you cold?" he asked.

Just then I heard footsteps in the girls' play-room; this time they were real; Brush heard them too.

"Superintendent," he said with an effort.

When I crept into my bed the clock below struck one. For a long while I lay awake. I could hear noises downstairs, Gray-beard's door open and close, and the door of Brush's room. I heard a window raised, then everything became still.

We did not know how fondly we were attached to Brush, how truly he had been our leader, until we four, left alone, lingered around his grave in the shadowy darkness of night, each one reluctant to leave.

The Mission bell rang for evening service, and with slow steps we moved toward the school — no longer "The Middle Five."

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